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ABSTRACT

This study organized in 2 sections examined the progress of 32 New Zealand children during their first 3 years at school. Their achievement levels in reading, mathematics, and writing were examined based on interviews with the children, their teachers, and their parents; school records; notes; and video recordings. Section 1 deals with perceptions of progress, in light of the child's actual progress; and section 2 discusses assessment and reporting practices that conveyed the child's progress to parents. The study found tension between the worlds of school and home and between perceived differences in approaches to children's learning. Teachers' understanding of how children make progress was in accord with their approach to curriculum and assessment. Their approach was oriented to developing an internal motivation for learning based on the perception that ability is changeable through effort ("learning goal" motivation). The study found that such teachers are more likely to use helpful learning strategies than persons with a "performance goal" orientation, which relies on external feedback and sees ability as fixed. Some classroom practices, however, did not fit the "learning goal" model, and the study considered the ambiguous nature of tangible feedback (such as stickers and stamps) and use of ability groups. Teachers' concern that parents may focus on these forms of feedback to gauge their child's progress was also explored. The study highlights the importance of clear communication with parents and crossing gaps between home and school that affect child's learning. (Contains two sets of references, approximately 80 and 50 items, respectively. Five appendices contain school descriptions and interview schedules.) (TM)

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LEARNING TO LEARN

Children's Progress Through the First 3 Years of School

CATHY WYLIE and LESLEY SMITH

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LEARNING TO LEARN

Children's Progress Through the First 3 Years of School

CATHY WYLIE
and LESLEY SMITH

New Zealand Council for Educational Research
Wellington

1995

New Zealand Council for Educational Research
PO Box 3237
Wellington
New Zealand

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ABSTRACT

Learning To Learn: Children's Progress Through the First 3 Years of School

This study looks at the progress of 30 children from 10 Wellington schools during their initial school years, through their eyes, the eyes of their teachers, and their parents, in relation to their achievement levels in reading, mathematics, and writing. It shows that teachers' understanding of how children make progress is in tune with their approach to curriculum and assessment. This approach can be described as oriented to developing an internal motivation for learning, resting on the perception that ability is changeable through effort (Dweck's "learning goal" motivation). People with such an approach have been found more likely to use helpful learning strategies than those who have a "performance goal" orientation, relying heavily on external feedback.

Not all the classroom practices fit this model, however, and particular attention is paid to the ambiguous nature of tangible feedback such as stickers and stamps, and the use of (ability) groups. Teachers' concern that parents may focus on these forms to gauge their child's progress, and make comparisons between children their yardstick (a performance-goal approach) are also explored within this framework of different approaches to learning. The material brings out some of the tensions which can arise in the overlapping worlds of school and home, and differences in understanding of how to help children's learning. The importance of clear communication with parents, and efforts to cross gaps between home and school that impact on children's learning are emphasised.

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We are very grateful for the Ministry of Education's financial support for this study.

SUMMARY

The study reported here followed 32 children from 10 schools in the wider Wellington area between 1989 and 1992 over their first 3 years at school. Material has been collected through annual interviews with the children, their teachers, and their parents; school records; teachers' notes on the children's progress; and annual video recording of the children at work in the classroom.

The study focused on 2 aspects of children's progress:

- Perceptions of progress, in the light of the children's actual progress.
- The assessment and reporting practices which were used to gauge the children's achievement and to convey that information to parents and other teachers.

A dominant and fascinating motif in teachers' discussion of the factors involved in children's progress was the figure of the well-intentioned but undermining parent. This is associated with the inevitable boundary tension between the worlds of school and home as a child becomes an inhabitant of both; but it is also associated with a tension relating to perceived differences in approaches to children's learning. Most of the teachers appeared to be operating within a "learning-goal" framework of children's learning, which is based on a model of progress which is multidimensional and spiral, with an idea of ability as something amenable to effort, rather than one which sees progress as linear, and based on "performance" goals, seeing ability as fixed. The teachers' model fits their classroom organisation patterns, and curriculum and assessment resources and structures. It is also well supported by the research literature. Yet some of the classroom practices are similar to those which would be found in classrooms leaning more to a performance-goal framework for children's learning; and some of the measures for progress, often the ones most visible to parents, remain the same.

Analysis of the data underlines the importance of bringing out-of-school experience into use in the school setting, and the value of improving mutual understanding of, and feedback between, the domains we shorthand as "home" and "school". Although lip service has been paid to good "communication" between these 2 domains, the material shows that there is scope for different forms of exchange of information and joint approaches to improve children's learning and wellbeing. This is particularly evident for children whose social and language backgrounds are different from those of their teachers and peers.

To provide a better "match" between home and school, some changes would be needed in our understanding of the role of teachers, and the support given teachers (for example, time). More analysis by teachers of their own teaching practices and classroom organisation in the context of children's achievement, and any differences between children, would also be useful.

The material gives us a rich resource on the perspectives of 3 of the main players in children's initial school careers, and, because it does illuminate these in the context of classroom and curriculum practices, should improve our understanding of how children become school learners, and what then may help or hinder them. It brings home the complex and cumulative nature of progress, making more evident the drawbacks to relying on any one factor or intervention to bring about radical or lasting improvements, and the shortfall of any educational policy based on the idea that progress is linear, and one-

on any one factor or intervention to bring about radical or lasting improvements, and the shortfall of any educational policy based on the idea that progress is linear, and one-dimensional, and that effective teaching is best based on a performance-goal rather than a learning-goal orientation.

Most of the assessment practices were closely linked to the curriculum emphasis and classroom organisation of the schools, and were mainly used to diagnose children's individual needs to guide teaching effort, and to group children to provide them with appropriate learning resources. Assessment in reading and mathematics, which was used to allocate children to groups, could have a summative effect if children's progress was then gauged by the group, rather than individually monitored. The most common assessment practices were running records in reading; BSM checkpointing and New Growth mathematics testing (in the third year); and in writing, correction. Children's own assessment of their work occurred most often in writing. Spelling tests became frequent in the third year, as did more formal comprehension exercises.

Teachers generally found the assessment methods they used useful. It is suggested that this is because most were practical, could largely, though not wholly, be carried out within the normal flow of classroom activities, were matched to curriculum, and identified particular areas which might need further work as well as identifying achievement levels. This finding suggests the kinds of assessment methods which are most likely to be most easily adopted in any national system, such as the Achievement Initiative currently in development.

Material is also included in this report on the information available to teachers when children enter school, and on the information which parents receive on their child's progress. Parent perceptions of progress are based on the evidence they receive from the school, as well as their own values and beliefs about what and how children should be learning. A gap sometimes exists between the direction taken by schools (which is largely supported by the research literature on learning and assessment), and parents' understanding of how children develop. It is suggested that parental concerns and any shortfalls in parental understanding could be bridged by providing more specific information about both individual children's work, and the aims and methods of their teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Scope of This Study

The first years of school are often regarded as critical to the overall success of a child's learning career by researchers, parents, and teachers alike. Both school and home characteristics, resources, and cultures (values and practices) are thought to play substantial roles. The aim of this study was to gather mainly qualitative data from school and home, from teachers, parents - and the children, who straddle both worlds - to illuminate the process of initial school progress in New Zealand.

The specific research questions which this report addresses with material gathered between 1989 and 1992 are:

- How do teachers and parents view the ingredients of successful learning and progress in the junior school?
- How do children view their own ability and progress? Do they use the same criteria or signs as their parents and teachers?
- What resources do children have at home that back up their school learning? Do they see their parents and older siblings using the skills that are emphasised at school?
- Are differences in parents' views related to different experiences of their children's classrooms, or their own schooling? How do different patterns of communication with the school, and information passing between school and home, affect parents' views?
- How do teachers' assessment practices fit with their teaching intentions, classroom organisation, and school policies and culture?

The first 3 questions are covered in the first part of this report; the latter 2, in the second and selfcontained part, Assessment and Reporting Practices in the First 3 Years of School.[1] To set the scene, material on the curriculum of the first 3 years of school made available from the companion study to this directed by Geraldine McDonald (McDonald *et al.* 1991, 1992a, 1992b) is included at the end of this introduction.

Research Design

Twelve primary schools in the Wellington area were initially chosen as sites for the research. In selecting the schools, we aimed to include schools which varied in roll size and in their proportion of Maori children and which served communities with different socioeconomic profiles. Some schools received 1:20 staffing; others did not. Ten schools agreed to take part in the study: 7 state schools, 2 integrated schools, and 1 independent school. A change of teaching staff in 1 state school, and staff reluctance at an independent school, were the reasons for the other 2 schools to decline our request for their participation, despite initial interest. Brief portraits of the 10 schools and their guiding philosophy to junior school learning are given in Appendix 1.

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[1] Much of this section appeared in the interim report of the same name, published early in 1992 by NZCER. This section updates that interim report with third-year material from parents and children, in the context of the further development of the Government's assessment policy, the Achievement Initiative.

Background interviews with assistant principals responsible for the junior department in their school and parallel interviews with the teachers responsible for the 10 classrooms in which the study began were carried out in July-August 1989. (All interview schedules and the content of the progress folder filled in by the children's teachers in their second and third years can be found in Appendix 2.) At the same time, consent forms were sent home to the families of all children in these classes so that videoing of children (used in the McDonald study) could take place. The videoing focused on 4 children in each class, who were also the children who form the sample for this study. The children were randomly chosen on the basis of gender and birth date, with the aim of having 2 children born in the first half of the year, and 2 in the second, an aim which was sometimes difficult to achieve in those new entrant classes in which children stayed only briefly before moving on during the year. In some cases, the lack of returned consent forms on the day of videoing the class also limited the selection sample. In some schools it proved necessary to include 1990 first-term new entrants to meet the base-line sample number of 40 children.

Video records were made of a full teaching day in each of the 10 initial classrooms. Teachers were asked for their views of the children, with samples of their work where they existed.

In the third term of 1989, a further structured interview was conducted with the teachers, exploring in depth their views of ability and achievement, their teaching intentions, and their expectations of children at the level they taught. The children were each interviewed to explore their perceptions of classroom life, particularly achievement and groupings, the activities they enjoyed, their friends, and their reaction to rewards and reprimands. These interviews also included common tasks in 2 key skill areas, reading and mathematics. For reading, the task was story retelling (*Reading in Junior Classes*, pp. 122-123, as suggested by the project's advisory committee meeting in September 1989), and keys to their understanding of numbers were derived from Young-Loveridge's study (1987). Parents[2] were interviewed, usually by telephone, on their perception of their child, his/her progress at school, and on their contact with the school. School records of children's achievements, attendance records, and samples were collected at the end of the year.

In 1990 the sample children and their teachers were interviewed in the first term, and a progress folder filled in by teachers was used to chart the children's achievements in the first and second terms. School records were used to note progress at the end of the year. In the third term, video records were made of the sample children in writing sessions, and structured interviews were conducted with the children, their parents, and their teachers. The children's interviews included reading and mathematical tasks.

In the third round of the research, children were again interviewed, and given reading and mathematical tasks in the first and third terms; parents were interviewed, in their homes, in the third term (but in the first term of 1992 for 1990 entrants to the study); teachers were interviewed briefly in the first term about the sample children, and again in the third term, with additional questions on their teaching aims, assessment practices, and views of how children had progressed. They also filled in progress folders for the children at the end of the first term and the beginning of the third term, and provided writing samples and achievement levels in mathematics and reading at the end of the year (or at

[2] All the teachers interviewed were female, as were most of the parents.

the end of the first term of 1992 for 1990 children).

At the end of 1989 the sample comprised 35 5-year-olds in 10 classrooms. In the third term of 1990, the sample was 39 children in 18 classrooms, of whom 30 were 6-year-olds from the original sample and 9 were 5-year-olds added in term 1, 1990. At the end of 1991, 32 children (16 girls, 16 boys) remained in 18 classes - 23 7-year-olds and 9 6-year-olds.

Of the 44 children in the sample from 1989 to term 3, 1991, a total of 12 left the schools, 10 to go to other schools in the greater Wellington area. It is difficult to detect any pattern for school changes relating to ethnic group, socioeconomic class, parental occupation, family composition, or housing tenure, perhaps because of the small numbers in this study. Two-thirds of those who moved were girls. The only school in our sample which retained its original 4 children was a Catholic school serving a diverse ethnic and socioeconomic population.

The possibility of following up the children who had left the study schools was raised with the project's advisory committee in term 1, 1991. Although only 2 had left the district, a number of problems still emerged: the loss of data with the lapse of time, the difficulty of gathering comparable data on the schools the children had moved to, and primarily, the lack of resources. It was decided that the investigation of children who moved was in effect a separate study in itself. However, the loss of 12 of 44 children who were at some stage part of the sample should be noted.

The sample of children was not selected to be representative of the social characteristics for their age group as a whole, across New Zealand. Looked at from a representational angle, however, and comparing the sample proportions with 1991 census data, the sample would offer an overrepresentation of children from professional households, Samoan children, and those from intact families. Of the 30 children for whom we have full data, 14 are female, 16 male; 20 are Pakeha/European, 5 Samoan, 3 Maori, 1 Asian, and 1 part-Pakeha/European. The main income earner of 10 of the families had professional or semiprofessional work; 8 skilled or trades work; and 12 semiskilled or unskilled work. The majority of the families were intact nuclear households.

We did not set out to select children on the basis of their preschool achievement or competence, although this would doubtless have been a useful perspective to the study. Our reasons for not doing so were twofold. On the pragmatic level we lacked both sufficient financial resources for the research and time to develop the research design further. No appropriate, ready-made assessment instrument was available, and we were cautioned by the fact that children's competencies at this age are often highly changeable. Had we been embarking on this study in 1993, it is highly likely that we would have turned to the set of children's tasks and the instrument to assess teachers' perceptions of children's competencies which have been piloted for the longitudinal study of early childhood experiences funded by the Ministry of Education, *Competent Children* (Hendricks, Meade, and Wylie, 1993).

Because we were interested in the classroom setting, and sought a range of ages within it, with some initial thoughts of following up Geraldine McDonald's work on pupil retention, our sample of children does not allow the precise comparisons of progress rates which can be made with a sample of children with uniform birth dates.

Our material does yield a rich resource on the perspectives of 3 of the main players in children's initial school careers, and, because it does illuminate these in the context of classroom and curriculum practices, it should improve our understanding of how children

become school learners, and what then may help or hinder them. Analysis of the data underlines the importance of bringing out-of-school experience (largely, but not exclusively at home) into use in the school setting, and the value of improving mutual understanding of, and feedback between, the domains we refer to as *home* and *school*. Although lip service has been paid to good *communication* between these 2 domains, the material shows that there is scope for different forms of exchange of information and joint approaches to improve children's learning and wellbeing. This is particularly evident for children whose social and language backgrounds are different from those of their teachers and peers.

An interactionist model of children's progress, in which progress can be visualised as a process of *crystallising*, or increasing substance, is also developed from the material. This model fits in well with contemporary research-based theories of learning, which emphasise "learning goals" rather than "performance goals". The material presented here should bring home the complex and cumulative nature of progress, making more evident the drawbacks of relying on any one factor or intervention to bring about radical or lasting improvements, and the shortfall of any educational policy based on the idea that progress is linear, and one-dimensional.

Junior School Curriculum and Teaching Practices

The companion Junior School Project study headed by Geraldine McDonald focused on the nature of the curriculum taught in the first 3 years of school, and on teaching styles. Material for the study came from all 10 classrooms from which our 1989 sample of children was drawn, and from 4 of the second- and third-year classrooms (in 4 different schools) in which our children found themselves. The conclusion of McDonald *et al.* (1992b) from this material is that there was "ample evidence of a general teaching style associated with the New Zealand junior school" (p. x). Our interview-based data, and less systematic observations of all the 46 classrooms our children found themselves in, support this conclusion. What are the reasons for this?

McDonald *et al.* point -

> . . . to a common 'philosophy' of teaching, to the nature of 5-year-olds and to the fact that the reading and mathematics resources were the same in all but one of the schools. (1992b, p. 77)

To this we can add what we may have taken for granted in New Zealand: a single national curriculum, common teacher training, and only insignificant differences in class and group size.

Differences that were found between teachers' styles in the video-based study -

> related to particular subject matter, the choice of resources for this and the time apportioned to each curriculum area, rather than to some global approach to the task of teaching. (ibid., p. 77)

In the study schools, children worked in small groups, individually on their own, or as a whole class. They experienced teacher support, intervention, and feedback in all 3 situations, and peer support, intervention, and feedback in groups and whole-class teaching. They also experienced a range of activities in each curriculum area. For example, they came to reading through listening to stories and answering questions on what they had heard, reading to the teacher, reading to each other, and listening to audio tapes while

they followed the story on the page. In mathematics, they had activities which developed their understanding of core concepts such as shape and size, as well as the well-remembered "times table" and sums of earlier school generations. The commonality of the study classrooms can be found as much in this use of a kitbag of various methods of learning as in the following of a broad, shared curriculum.

The stated aims of the curriculum for various subject areas are discussed in the section on Assessment and Reporting Practices, in the context of how they fit with the practices found in the study. The McDonald *et al.* study makes another useful contribution to our understanding of how the curriculum is realised in classrooms by identifying the core principles at work behind the variety of activity. In reading, *meaning* is fundamental; in mathematics, the grasp of *concepts* and *use of language*; in writing, *experience* and *illustration* as expressed by McDonald *et al.*:

> (1) The use of children's own experience;
> (2) Encouragement to children to work out for themselves how to write a word . . .
> (3) The following of the literary conventions of children's books in which the text tells a story which is illustrated (McDonald *et al.* 1992a, p. 45).

The material collected by McDonald *et al.* did not allow them as many examples of science, music, or physical education teaching and learning.

Interwoven with these specific principles are other equally important principles: thinking about one's actions - developing a self-observing layer, or, in the reading jargon "self-correction". Throughout the day teachers explain, and ask for explanation or amplification, thus underlining the importance of this dimension of knowledge, skill, and, as McDonald *et al.* describe it, moral goodness. McDonald *et al.* also advance the thesis that this *scaffolding* approach by the junior school teachers accustomed the children to question-and-answer formats which resemble those of more formal general-ability testing further up the school (McDonald *et al.* 1991, pp. 54-59). If this is so, and the teaching emphasis on reading and writing for "meaning" is also successful, then it appears that children are absorbing several different styles of learning, and ways of producing learning "product", for different occasions. A moot point, perhaps, is whether both are always carried over into life outside school.

SECTION A - PERCEPTIONS OF PROGRESS

1 WHAT IS PROGRESS?

Preamble

A simple definition of "progress" is moving on: moving forward. When the children in our study made progress in their learning to read, they sometimes passed observable milestones: they opened a book the right way up, they read "dad" as dad, instead of da, or bad; they read a whole page out loud in a confident monotone; and, a moment to celebrate, they finished a story, and laughed. But a child's learning journey is not just the passage of a being who remains unchanged. Progress also means internal change, not all of which is directly or immediately observable. Within the junior classroom environment, outward signs of children's progress are manifest as much in the absorption of children in their learning work, their changing use of the teacher(s), and their acceptance of the classroom organisation and timetable. The teachers in our study expected children by their third year at school to be able to settle to their school work and stay at it without direct teacher supervision or attention. They also expected them to be able to use other resources within the classroom, if appropriate: dictionaries, charts, spelling lists - and each other. They hoped that the children could work "independently", not being baulked by words or material they had not encountered before: persisting rather than giving up in the face of difficulty or challenge. In summary, to have understood what school was about and to value its purpose, that is, to have learnt how to learn.

Progress in the first 3 years of school is thus, from a teaching perspective, multidimensional. Knowledge and skills are acquired, but only if attention and effort are given. It is easier to give attention if you are comfortable and confident in the presence of other children, able to share, and give and take. The practice of knowledge and skills yields rewards, which encourage confidence, attention, and effort, and so the *spiral* of learning continues.

The spiral is often bumpy. Sometimes it flattens into a circling plateau. The acquisition of new knowledge and skills brings new horizons, unpractised activities. Progress is not a simple matter of climbing a ladder, or moving from "easy" material to "harder". In one, outward, sense children who are reading "chapter" books are indeed tackling material which would seem impossible to a child who has just begun to discern the word "to" on a printed page. Yet that child's inward attitude to the material, how he or she sees the achievement, and what he or she takes from the activity which helps or hinders future progress, may be closer to the beginning reader than his or her neighbour in the same reading group.

A very useful distinction has been made in the research literature on motivation between "performance" and "learning" goals (Bandura 1989, Dweck 1986). People with a performance goal seek "to gain positive judgements/avoid negative judgements of competence" (Dweck 1986, p. 1040). Because their sense of ability rests on a perception that it is inherent, and fixed, they are more likely to use maladaptive learning strategies if they do have low confidence in their own ability. Those with a learning goal "in which individuals seek to increase their competence, to understand or master something new"

(ibid.), resting on a perception that ability is changeable, are more likely to use helpful learning strategies, such as seeking challenge, and persisting.

Most of the teachers in our study would see children who have a performance-goal orientation as changeable. They believe that a suitable learning environment can foster habits of persistence, and acceptance of challenge. It can imbue a learner with the confidence to try. The research literature also supports this (e.g., Dweck 1986, Good and Weinstein 1986, Grolnick and Ryan 1987). Much of what the teachers in our study said about their classroom aims and practice also fitted in with recommendations from the research, such as pitching learning material at a level which provides both confidence and challenge, and putting more emphasis on personal achievement rather than comparative ranking in their feedback to children.[3] Current New Zealand curriculum resources in reading and mathematics, with assessment based on mastery, also support this approach, though the good intentions of regular, individual monitoring, and provision of appropriate work to take students further on their learning journey, were not always met in the classrooms in our study.

Most of the teachers in our study did not see the children who came into their classrooms as set entities. While they were usually prepared to give us global judgments of children's ability, they would more often than not do so after a discussion which established that ability was multifaceted, and not the same as IQ level. In telling us of the factors they thought helped, or impeded, children's learning progress, they rarely stopped with the child's own character: that was something to be explained or sourced. While the children's home was a major factor in their explanations for new entrant children, the school environment became more important as the children moved through the school. Ability, and therefore progress, was seen as an interactive process.

In describing and analysing the perceptions of progress which emerged from our interviews with teachers, parents - and children - we shall be looking therefore at perceptions of both what progress is, and what factors are involved. While many of the parents we spoke to shared the teachers' sense of progress as an interactive process between the child and their environments, some parents saw it more in a performance-goal framework, as if their children were climbing a single set of necessary stairs: a linear and unidimensional model of progress, rather than the multidimensional spiral process which we found in the teachers' comments. Parents were also inclined to put more weight than teachers on school factors in their perceptions of learning success: a difference which raises some important issues of the roles of home and school *vis-à-vis* each other.

It is not clear from our material whether the children in this study were inclined to linear or spiral models of their progress. But they do not appear to have opted for the fixed-entity model of ability which fits with the performance-goal framework. Most appear to associate learning with effort, and to judge themselves more by achievement landmarks than by comparisons with other children.

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[3] Johnson and Johnson (1992, p. 47) cite research which concludes, contrary to the public views of some who feel that a competitive economy needs a competitive education system to turn out competitive individuals, that competitive traits are not in fact associated with high achievement:

> . . . competitiveness typically lowers job performance, as competitive individuals get so concerned about triumphing over colleagues that they ignore important aspects of their jobs, lack concentration and focus, lose sight of the 'big picture' and overall goals, are short-term oriented, and become distracted from the task at hand.

Teachers' Perceptions of Progress

Our interviews with teachers ranged more widely than our interviews with parents and children: in turn, teachers' pictures of progress and its ingredients are usually drawn from a much wider and deeper pool than that of either parents or children - though they are as liable as any of us to make one swallow into a summer when an incident or encounter is particularly striking. Parental experience draws its images of progress and what helps, or does not help, from their own children, other individual children known to them, their own schooling, their discussions with teachers and other parents, and, perhaps, media images and their own reading. Teacher images also draw on some of these sources, but their images are mainly taken from their work with many children, some of whom they have worked with or kept up with over several years, as well as their own professional training.

One example of the complexity of unravelling children's learning progress and the factors involved, is that teachers learn about the children they teach, and make judgments about them, in the very environment they create for them, the classroom. To some extent the behaviour they observe, and the clues this gives them as to character and attitude, are, in an interactionist framework, shaped by that environment. Although children are not passive in this environment, and can negotiate much of the content through which they learn (McDonald *et al.* 1991) they can rarely negotiate their setting, nor the rules of their dialogue with their teacher(s), and each other.

Our analysis begins with a close reading of the notes from interviews with the assistant principals of the 10 schools in the study. This enabled us to develop a skeleton picture of the major themes which teachers associated with progress, and the process by which they arrived at them.

Themes from the Assistant Principals

Assistant principals[4] are experienced teachers who are responsible for the overall co-ordination and organisation of the junior school. Most of the 10 assistant principals we spoke with at the start of our study, in 1989, also had full responsibilities for their own class, teaching some aspect of the curriculum, or taking Reading Recovery or remedial work in other curriculum areas. Only one had no fixed teaching duties, other than some remedial and extension work on a one-to-one basis.

In their interviews, the assistant principals covered school organisation; the range of children in the junior school; the junior school aims or philosophy; assessment, promotion, and retention practices; withdrawal of children for remedial or extension purposes; resources and contact with parents; and what teachers in the junior school did when they were concerned with a child's lack of progress. While there were no direct questions on the ingredients of progress in these interviews, progress was a major ingredient in their replies to our questions.

Adjustment

> If they're not happy and secure, they're not learning.

One of the major themes related to children's progress, or lack of it, was the importance of a good transition to school from home and early childhood education settings. The terms

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[4] Formerly known as Senior Teachers, Junior Classes, or STJCs.

which assistant principals used here to describe the kind of environment they aimed to create in the new entrant classroom(s) were ones such as *secure, calm, caring, steady*.

What factors did they see as making it difficult for children to adjust to this new environment of school? Narrow experiences, lack of early childhood educational experience, and broken or solo parent homes were the most pronounced.

> They should have had hundreds of books before they're 5.

> There aren't many who come straight from home. One little fellow has, and it's been harder for him to settle compared to the others who have been part of a group. It's an advantage for our children, that they have had preschool training.

> Lack of early childhood education experience is a major disadvantage for half of our children. They're also from homes with no regular activities, left very much to their own devices for most of the day. They have language delays because of this, crayons and pencils are quite new objects for them, they're shy or timid, and they have high absenteeism.

> If they're from solo parent families, they can have behaviour problems, because solo parents get so tired.

> Children with fairly significant world knowledge, with a wide range of experiences, lots of talking - those children are really away when they come to school, and they want to learn. You can feel and hear it.

Early childhood educational experience was important to the assistant principals in 2 respects: fostering the child's own development, and fitting them into the school environment. It prepared children to be with other children, to be attentive to an adult who was not their parent or relative, and to work on their own, or with other children. It also exposed them to experiences they could not have within their own homes. Assistant principals in those schools where a substantial number of children had not had early childhood educational experience noted the need to work individually with those children as much as possible.

They also spoke, as did others, of the value of other children in introducing children to the structure and work of school. Some schools had formalised this into a "buddy" system, pairing older hands with newcomers; others relied on mixed ability and school experience groupings. Older children could *model* the appropriate behaviour for school - what 1 assistant principal called "early management skills", as well as provide peer-learning opportunities. One effect of having children who have been to the same early childhood educational institution is that they have already established a basis for relationships, allowing a thread of continuity which contributes to steadiness.

Although early childhood educational experience was generally seen as useful, some was more useful than others in the eyes of some assistant principals (*see also* Renwick 1984). Different assistant principals mentioned different early childhood education types. What troubled one did not trouble another. Their criteria for their assessment of different types were, however, similar: how well they thought the children adapted to their own particular school programme, and, therefore, the demands they might make of teachers, which could compete with curriculum coverage.

> Those who have been to kindy settle in well, they've settled into good learning routines. Kindergarten makes them feel secure. Once school routines are established, children learn very quickly.

> Playcentre children are harder to control when they start school because they're more boisterous.

> Montessori children are reluctant to get started, they're less interested in learning, they don't seem to think 'Oh it's wonderful, I've come to school, I'm going to read and write.' At Montessori they have their place on the mat, they are made to conform. It's harder to get them motivated to self-learning.

It is important to set these judgments in context.[5] Most of the assistant principals who made them were used to their new entrants coming through from 1 or 2 types of early childhood education. Most had close liaison with a particular centre which would, unintentionally, either set a norm of new entrant children's behaviour which coloured teacher perceptions of children coming from another centre, or, conversely, appear to "produce" children who were better adapted to the particular classroom because the children were acquainted with the classroom and teacher through pre-entry visits, or because the children coming into the new entrant class already knew each other.

The match between the behaviour of particular children and the structure and mores of their particular classroom looms as large for assistant principals' views of children's initial adjustment or progress as the children's prior knowledge, such as the names of colours, recognition of letters, knowledge that a book is to be opened and read, and practised skills, such as holding a crayon or a pair of scissors so that they can be used.

Yet the assistant principals' comments about previous (home) experience which seemed to them to thwart such a match between children's behaviour and the classroom structure also reveal a desire for junior school teachers, particularly at the new entrant level, to be providing the children with novel experiences which excite their willing attention. School *should* be a different world for the children.

Thus, in the main the children are the "entrants", the ones who need to adjust (as adults are expected to adjust to their employment and learning institutions). Assistant principals felt, though, that they and their new entrant teachers had the responsibility of helping individual children make a good transition to school, and to help them make the most of the opportunities of the learning environment. They saw their role in this respect as providing human warmth and fostering emotional security. Several of the assistant principals spoke of positive feedback such as "on the first day, everything they do is brilliant", and most, though they might not teach them themselves, knew the names of all the new entrant children.

Pace

All the assistant principals thought children came into school at different levels of achievement and maturity, and made their entry at different speeds into the symbolic worlds (of words, mathematics, and games, amongst others) which schools offer. The organisation of new entrant classrooms reflected this in grouping children by their achievement level for instruction, and for the allocation of resources at their learning level, particularly in reading and mathematics. This is a shift from the whole-class teaching which was emphasised in the class organisation which most of the parents and teachers in this

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[5] Anne Smith *et al.* (1990) found no significant differences related to type of early childhood education in the social behaviour of New Zealand 8- and 9-year-olds. McClinton and Topping (1981) compared teacher views of children entering their classrooms from full-day and half-day kindergartens with the same programme approach in the United States, and found that though there was no discernible difference between the basic skills of the 2 groups at the beginning of school or at the end of the first year, first-grade teachers judged children coming from the full-day kindergartens to be more capable students when they entered their classrooms. The researchers concluded that this was because these children were already used to a full day's learning work.

study remembered from their own schooling. This shift allows a better opportunity to pitch learning content for the full range of new entrant children at a level which is most likely to allow a child to progress: the level which allows both security and challenge. However, as in any form of teaching, if children are insufficiently monitored, then it can lead to stagnation, or circularity in learning.[6]

Half the schools also had regular developmental or "choice" time, which also endeavoured to capitalise on children's different interests or preferences amongst available tools for learning, and at the same time to foster and consolidate children's individual ability to make choices and work (persevere) on their own.

Two assistant principals whose new entrant intake had high proportions of children without early childhood educational experience sought to "hurry them up" at the start of their school life, presumably so they could catch up with others who had started further ahead. But others mentioned the importance of not *pushing* children too far or too fast in relation to their junior school programme goals. Indeed, one assistant principal (in a school where early childhood educational experience was the norm) was able to show overall increases in reading levels for standard 1 children after the junior school had deliberately steered away from moving children as fast as possible through the reading book levels. This was a shift from a perception of progress as unidimensional and linear to the more multidimensional model.

Some also felt that one obstacle to children's achievement was parental pressure on children to make faster progress than was evident, possible, or desirable.

> I find there are children who are very nervous, pressured by their parents. I usually tell the parents to ease off. I won't make the child's life a misery just because the parent thinks I should.

> Lots of parents are worried without reason - they have expectations over and above what the children can do. They can be very very anxious the first 2 years - they seem to settle as the children are happier: we show them that we really do care, that we like their children.

This image of the pressuring or anxious parent recurred as a dominant and fascinating motif in comments made by the study's teachers on children's progress. Why was this?

From our material, the reasons are twofold. First, teachers whose ideas about, and experience of, children making progress emphasise an interactionist, spiral view based on a learning-goal orientation, linked with internalised persistence and willingness to rise to a challenge ("take risks"), find themselves in opposition to those parents or others who could influence their classroom practice, who have retained (from their own schooling) or fastened on to a linear model of progress, and who believe, wrongly according to both teachers and research evidence, that the best way to encourage learning is to emphasise performance measures and comparative judgments (including streaming of classes). Teachers are not free agents. They cannot ignore such parents, who have a rightful interest in their children's progress. Because some performance measures are in fact found in classrooms emphasising a learning-goal model, the difference between the models may not be clear to people who hold a linear, performance-goal model. Thus it is possible for some

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[6] *See*, for example, the discussion in Glynn *et al.* (1989) of the way class groupings after Reading Recovery can lower its long-term effectiveness for individual children, and Young-Loveridge's (1991) discussion of Beginning School Mathematics (BSM) placement. It is worth noting also that the homogeneous grouping common in the study schools is not the only possible response to individual difference (e.g., Johnson and Johnson 1992).

of the current advocates of a "clever" society, and a general upskilling of the population to encompass problem-solving and improved cognitive and social skills, to nonetheless advocate, in contradiction of their own aim, the retention of norm-based examinations, uniform age-based "standards", or increased streaming.

Second, once they have embarked on the school journey, children inhabit at least 2 worlds: school and home. As much as teachers are conscious of capitalising on home experiences, they are also aware of the reverse: that home experiences can be more powerful than their best efforts. Teacher uneasiness about the overlapping of the 2 realms, where they (and parents) have responsibility for something - pupil development or progress - that in fact draws on and contributes to *both* realms - finds expression in such distilled images as the "pushy" parent, or the "doting" (dependent-making/keeping) parent.

Too great a dependency on adults - "they have everything done for them at home" - was one of the factors identified by the assistant principals in children not making the initial progress their teachers thought they could. Other factors were nervousness, behavioural problems, and difficulty adjusting to the peer-group atmosphere of the classroom.

Independence is one of the main curriculum goals in the first 3 years of school, and was particularly emphasised for new entrants. Junior school teachers do not expect children to be fully independent of them in their first year of school. But, as with some experience of the world of reading and writing (through being read to), or ease of working with other children (learning through "play"), those who come with some degree of independence are able to take greater advantage of the learning environment - take quicker steps and take in a wider prospect.

As other writers have noted (e.g., Renwick 1984, p.13), independence in the junior school setting means children being able to do things on their own, without constant help from a teacher. It does not mean challenging the teacher, or deciding to do something different from the timetabled activity. The terms which accompanied *independence* when the assistant principals spoke of it were ones like *self-discipline* and *taking responsibility for their own behaviour*. As McDonald *et al.* (1991) point out, these are the manifestations of the moral emphasis in school learning which is as present now as it was at the beginning of the century, albeit with some differences in meaning.

The social context of children's individual independence was a strong theme in the assistant principals' discussion of their promotion and retention practices.[7] Social competence and individual self-esteem, and then age (or length of time in the classroom), were the major factors in assistant principals' decisions on whether or not to retain, or promote, a child. Class organisation, the size of classes ahead, and the number of new entrants due to come in were other influences. There were interesting variations in what contributed to self-esteem, but they shared at heart the principle that children did best when they fitted in with others in the class. Some assistant principals saw that in terms of age, some in terms of the level of work.

> I don't like children to get behind their age group. Social maturity is important as well as the individual child's morale.

> Kids need mana. They might feel important in the junior school, but not in the senior school.

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[7] Very few pupils in New Zealand are promoted: 0.49 percent of the age cohort at age 6. For a succinct description and analysis of these practices in the New Zealand context, *see* McDonald (1989).

> You could place a bright child in a very unenviable position, with children a year older than them who are also very bright, and that child can never be quite as good because the bright children are older.
>
> Our J2 is further ahead than other people's. It might be overpowering for some children, they could give up completely.
>
> He [retained child] is the sort of child that could become a scapegoat for the older children to set up. He still has social problems with older children, he tries to impress them or do silly things. This year, because *he* is one of the older children, that has changed, and he is really developing social skills . . . his behaviour is still slightly off-beat. But he's found his level, and he's comfortable and confident, so much more confident.

Evidence from McDonald's (1989) analysis of the lack of change in retention rates after the introduction of the Reading Recovery programme in a sample of New Zealand schools, and from American research using control groups shows that retention does not raise standards of achievement across age cohorts. She concludes:

> . . . [retention practices] could result in over 30% of our children in a class below that appropriate to their age. We might have raised standards in the classes of promoted children, but would have lowered standards across the age cohorts for the very simple reason that children work within the challenge of a class level. Keep them back, and you reduce the challenge. (p. 83)

Recent American and Australian research has also found no academic gains for children "kept back" (Kenny 1991, Meisels 1992). Nonetheless, teachers find it hard to accept these research findings (Clary 1993). Why is this? Two possible answers are suggested by our material.

First, different classroom and school systems provide different contexts for teacher perceptions. The reasons for New Zealand teachers' beliefs are thus different from those for American teachers, though the same principle underlies them both. Retention in the United States is linked with beliefs about "school readiness", and structures which make it "real", such as tests which decide when, and sometimes how, children enter the school system (Ellwein *et al.* 1991, Graue 1992). In contrast, the comparative fluidity of classes, and ability grouping across home classrooms, meant that retention - and promotion - were not inflexible in most of our study schools. It was possible for a child to be in a J2 class, yet be working on J1 or S1 material. This meant that several teachers in this study who were aware of McDonald's work did not feel it applied to their school practice. And certainly, in contrast to classrooms described in the American literature, children who were working at levels below their chronological peers were not repeating ground they had already gone over. But the same principle can be seen: that to question one belief and practice (retention) is to raise questions about classroom organisation and guiding values and emphases (such as the importance of security).

Second, some of the assistant principals in this study felt that children's self-esteem and confidence, as reflected through their interactions with other children in the class, or comparisons of their work, were neglected in the McDonald analysis.[8] This can be seen to be premised on the importance of self-confidence as a learning resource, necessary if progress is to occur, and on the desire not to promote a comparison-based sense of self-worth and motivation. As such, it fits within an interactionist framework. If researchers use

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[8] Kenny's (1991) Australian study also found that teachers and children viewed "repetition" (retention) somewhat more positively than promotion.

only measures of academic achievement (often the easiest to find, and inexpensive if they already exist in school records) to examine the effects of school and class practices, they run the risk of not convincing teachers who believe that children are also learning, and developing, along another dimension, which may not show itself directly or immediately in existing standard measures of academic achievement. This brings us back to the concept of progress as a spiral, with several dimensions, not all of which will be at the same (observable) point at any one moment in time.

Yet there was also a curious paradox in the perceptions of the assistant principals who put weight on the value for children to be with their chronological peers, or to be in a class where they could "shine". On the one hand, they demonstrate a desire to cater for children's diversity as the best way to encourage learning, and to encourage habits of learning, which leads them away from seeking uniformity in the classroom; on the other, a perception that children need to be with others "like" themselves, and that those others are most likely to be those of the same age, or at the same stage, in broad terms. We may be seeing here an example of the way that new understanding - of learning, and child development - does not entirely replace or supplant previously held ideas, or ideas which may still be held by a teacher's colleagues or current in the school structure.

2 THEMES FROM THE CHILDREN'S TEACHERS

We asked teachers direct questions on children's progress: what helped a child be successful at school, obstacles to children's progress, and their view of ability. Their answers on their aims, what they did for children as a teacher, their use of stickers and stamps, the feedback on work and behaviour that had an impact on children, and children who were hard to teach also provided valuable material on their views of the ingredients of children's progress.

Aims

The hallmarks of the "academic" curriculum in the first year of our study schools were mainly learning to read and to write. What characterised the classroom as a learning environment was the time given to this work, and the implicit messages in the classroom environment which backed this up: what was up on the walls, on the tables, in the learning centres. One assistant principal used the phrase from process writing, "a print-saturated environment".

The specific curriculum goals of the teachers in the study are described in Section B of this report, on Assessment and Reporting Practices. This section looks at their more abstract goals, the principles which underpinned their daily work with children.

New Entrant Teachers

Learning was associated by the 10 new entrant teachers with *happiness, security*, and *excitement*.

> I give them choice, because life is about choice. I make them feel really good about themselves, so they will try something new - they won't be afraid to have a go at things. School life should be exciting, enriching, have highlights . . . . They are entitled to feel that you are there for them. Regardless of what you feel about them personally, you like them, and you think they're pretty good.

Security was as much a matter of this professional and real acceptance of each child as an individual as it was a matter of establishing routines, dependable structures, and promoting orderly behaviour amongst the children in the classroom. Several of the teachers described this acceptance of individual children as mother-like, with some noting how it was also different:

> I never had this patience with my children. The emotive tie isn't there. I can step back [as a teacher], I can say, 'This child is quite spiteful, what do I do.' When I took my daughter to playcentre she was so selfish I couldn't believe it - she was grabbing and clutching, not playing with anybody. Now I would think she was an only child, she was used to playing on her own, it was a question of teaching her to share.

Most of the teachers had taught children they did not initially like. They saw themselves as responsible first for ensuring that their personal dislike was not communicated to the child; second, for focusing on the positive attributes and achievements of the child; and finally, for trying to find ways to bring out the best in the child if the child's behaviour - usually disruptive, aggressive, or very withdrawn - was what irritated them. The first two professional responses were often enough to temper their initial feelings into liking. Their acceptance of each child as an individual did not preclude efforts to change negative

aspects of the child's attitudes, self-esteem, or behaviour which hindered learning progress.

A common theme amongst the teachers was the importance of *motivating* the children, of creating within them the spur to learn and to achieve. Achievement was marked with positive recognition from the teacher and the child's peers in the classroom setting, so that it could be seen by the child as "success" and worth having. Motivation was a matter of enlarging the spur that was already present in some children through previous experiences of success, positive feedback from parents and other adults, or intrinsic interest or attitude. For others, usually those whom their teacher(s) thought lacked prior experiences of the world of print, who were more accustomed to negative than positive feedback, or unused to doing things themselves, it was more a question of transfer from teacher and other children to the individual child.

Motivation was also associated with effort, "to always try their best" and, for some of the teachers, with self-discipline.

Second-year Teachers

None of the 22 second-year teachers referred to themselves as quasi-mothers, and the new entrant teacher emphasis on *security* also faded. *Happiness* was still mentioned, transmuted a little into *enjoyment*. *Excitement* also remained, sometimes as *challenge*. Added to the underlying principle of *motivation* were *working independently*, *working co-operatively*, *working profitably*, and *having a love of learning*.

The teachers expected more of the children in that they were no longer strangers to the classroom environment or to each other. Thus the increased emphasis in their aims on *work*, and aspects which enhanced children's concentration on their work such as listening, organising themselves and their "property" (such as pencils), and dealing effectively with their peers so that they were not distracted from engagement with curriculum activities and from creating products, such as stories.

Writing was a major aim of the second-year curriculum, and it required children to make an individual effort. Classes generally had more children in them (average 26) than the new entrant classes in the study (average 18). Not surprisingly, a common theme in the teachers' views of children who were difficult to teach were those who needed more supervision than the teacher could, or wanted to, provide.

> I'm starting to introduce some time management. I'd like them to be able to work independently for a certain length of time, to take responsibility especially for their learning, also to deal with conflict non-violently, and to have management strategies.

> They need to take responsibility for their belongings, be able to stay on task, be organised. I mean it's impossible for these kids with the mothers who do everything for them. It's just a battle. I've got mothers who come in and put their reading books back in the box, so of course when it comes to the kids doing it they don't know how because Mum does it all.

Other difficult-to-teach children were the competent ones who would not "extend" themselves (the "obdurate"):

> I find it really hard to deal with kids that just sit there and don't respond. I sometimes find it hard with the children that I know have got certain strategies, when they get to an unknown word in reading, and just sit there and stare.

Then there were the "impenetrable" children who gave little away.

The very withdrawn children, easily overlooked, who need a lot of individual help. They're harder to deal with than bolshie children.

Children whose English was a second language (ESL) were also mentioned. Most of the teachers who had ESL children in their class mentioned that the language base of Beginning School Mathematics (BSM) was seen as a particular barrier for them. In initial school progress, one important pivot is the degree of match between school and home. As yet, the BSM resources have not been translated, making it difficult for parents or teachers with a command of other languages to support these children.

Some researchers have suggested that "common verbal factors may underlie both arithmetic and reading" (Tiedemann and Faber 1992, p. 353). Certainly the children in our sample whose English was a second language and who were having problems with BSM, were also having problems - or not making as fast progress as their peers - in reading. It may not be enough to translate BSM resources into other languages if reading remains introduced through a foreign tongue occurring in only one of the child's two worlds.

Children who could not settle to work and bored children were also mentioned as needing particular attention.

The most difficult children to teach are gifted children. They're OK on a one-to-one basis. But as members of a class their frustration and disruption of others is more difficult to deal with.

Teachers at 4 of the schools expressed some frustration at the level of independence of children in their classroom. Lack of the desired level of independence, or the child taking insufficient responsibility for work, were attributed to home factors: to parenting style, or to being an only child. Interestingly, it was not attributed to the organisation of the classroom or curriculum materials. Perhaps the teachers' conscious emphasis on independence made it sometimes difficult for them to question whether their own practices actually supported this goal.

Third-year Teachers

Key words among the underlying principles expressed by the 22 third-year teachers in relation to their specific curriculum goals were *independence*, *consideration for others*, *willingness to try*, and the exploratory cluster of *taking initiative*, *being resourceful*, and *being curious*. Teachers at 3 of the schools were less interested in the exploratory cluster, and were more concerned with *politeness*. But they shared the emphasis on children getting on well with each other through tolerance, kindness or good manners, and solving those situations where they clashed with others in the class.

At the beginning of the year we write up our class rules, and the first one is: to be kind. I tried to work it out so that it was all positive.

It's important that they realise other class members have the right to their own opinion, and that problems can be solved by talking.

How to deal with incompatibility among themselves, and to show friendship. Children have to find school a happy place, to look forward to coming.

Learn to do things without always relying on the teacher. Work independently, not necessarily quietly, but if they talk, for it to be about the work that they're doing.

Some of them still flutter around like little fellows, can't settle themselves to work, don't think ahead,

no organisation skills. But hopefully the project work is going to achieve those things for them, with the whale theme we've just finished, a lot of them did get organised, they took work home, worked out their questions on a big chart, sorted them through, which ones they could do at home - and that's worked really well.

Perhaps this teacher emphasis on problem-solving reflects children's relaxation after a year or two of coming to grips with school routines and structures; perhaps it reflects their longer acquaintance with each other. It might also reflect the increasingly individual nature of much of the reading and writing - and hence the increased opportunity to "disrupt" each other and "interrupt" the teacher on her rounds amongst them. And perhaps it reflects the class size: a third of the third-year classes in our study had 31 or more children.

Language skills were prominent amongst the descriptions of the kind of children the third-year teachers found hard to teach: children from homes where the language was not English, children who were quiet and unresponsive - as well as children who used language as a weapon, or were "cheeky" to the teacher or their fellow children.

Several of the teachers were coping with psychologically troubled children. Some teachers, in talking of children they were not comfortable teaching, mentioned children who did not like coming to school, who evaded learning (children who did not find value in the teachers' world of school), or who were "slow" in their learning.

Hugs, Ticks, and Stickers - Teacher Feedback to Children

New Entrant Teachers

New entrant teachers let children experience success through praise: their comments to the children; ticks, stickers, and stamps; and sharing of work with other children in the class, or with other teachers, the assistant principal, or, sometimes, the principal. Several teachers preferred not to use stickers, feeling that they could foster dependency on external rewards for effort, rather than develop internal motivation. A few noted that for some children who did not seem to get much attention at home, one-to-one attention from the teacher often had a positive effect. One teacher whose children had occasional use of a computer noted that "getting a copy of the print-out really encourages their reading and writing". Several also emphasised that feedback had most effect when it was immediate.

While success took a tangible form, positive feedback could be given for both tangible and intangible achievements. Stickers and stamps rewarded effort as well as result. They were also given by some teachers to encourage children who were not achieving. Praise or recognition and the bestowal of a sticker to one child could be done publicly, so that others would put more effort into their work, mend their behavioural ways, or give more help to other children.

Feedback from the teacher to children operated simultaneously on the academic, moral, and organisational wavelengths, so closely are they integrated in the junior classroom (McDonald *et al.* 1991).

At the beginning of the day I say 'so and so's got a lovely sticker for doing such beautiful neat and tidy work, I'm so thrilled.' You see all the little darlings try so hard then, they might get one.

I give them to reward any good work or effort, or a new skill, or a longer story, neater printing, finger spacing. To a new child or insecure child to develop their confidence, encourage the child to try. If I'm trying to get one child to do something, I give them to other children who're doing that skill or work to encourage the child to try.

We do not have the data to definitively answer such questions as to which children received rewards of this kind, when, and why, because we did not undertake systematic classroom observation at regular intervals throughout the school year. What our interviews (of parents and children as well as teachers) suggest is that it would be a rare child who did not come home from time to time with a sticker or stamp; though later practices in the third year of school of sets of a certain number (5 or 10) yielding a unit of a higher denomination suggest that differentiation between children occurred then - if they were given solely on an individual rather than group basis.

The receipt of a sticker or stamp (or equivalent) appears as the compound result of a number of considerations: the teacher noticing the child's work or behaviour; the teacher thinking that the child needs encouragement; the child bringing work or behaviour to the teacher's notice. The complexity, and the catholic nature of sticker/stamp giving and receiving in most of our study classrooms, belied an original hypothesis that this might be a significant informal sorter or ranker of children. Nor did it seem to function as an indication which children themselves used to gauge their performance. While they mentioned teachers' comments or written marks (such as ticks) when giving us their judgments of their achievements, stickers and stamps barely figured.

Most of the new entrant teachers were indeed keen to provide an equal distribution of stickers and other praise amongst their children, in the awareness that other children took note, and that an uneven distribution could, by highlighting those making most progress, discourage others. Morine-Dershimer (1982) provides American material which supports this view.

This is an interesting illustration of how a practice which best fits into a performance-goal framework can take on a different meaning or role in classrooms which are not based on that framework, by the manner of their adoption. If one were to fasten simply on their appearance in the classroom, one might be drawn to a conclusion of contradictions between principles and practice - and sometimes that is indeed the case. But it is the *use* to which things are put that is often more telling than their appearance.

The common emphasis amongst the teachers on a *positive* approach to children was based firmly on their own experience that encouragement, and showing what other children could do, had more effect than scolding. Here children become each other's learning, or teaching, resources. Several commented on the need to ensure that children also gave each other positive rather than negative feedback. A "positive postbox" was used in one classroom to encourage children to practise such comments. The teachers were also aware that children could be each other's audiences for negative comments as well, and this made some careful about making such comments in public - though such comments were made when the occasion seemed to warrant it.

> Most want to please and impress their peers by getting praise from the teacher . . . They don't like to think they've really let you down by doing something silly or thoughtless, or disappointed you. If their peers see it [castigation] they lose face. You have to be really careful, because losing face for some people in front of their peers can send them over the edge.

The example above shows that a positive approach to children did not mean a complete absence of critique. Good and Weinstein (1986) note that the relationship between classroom processes and student achievement is often curvilinear: that is, too little, or too much of something are equally ineffective. To put it another way, more of something good will not necessarily produce better results: a classroom where praise is constantly given

will not yield greater dividends than one where children receive, when justifiable, critical feedback - though it will yield greater dividends than one where negative feedback dominates.

Release at the end of the day provided teachers with another opportunity to reinforce the essential messages that effort and order are rewarded, and everything that happens in the classroom carries meaning, is to be "read" (deciphered), and understood. Only 4 of the teachers let children go all at once, or by unchanging and largely unchangeable attributes like gender. Others chose the order of children to go by how well they were sitting on the mat, how well they had worked that day, or how kind they had been to other children; or by categories such as colour of clothes or type of shoe, which linked back to curriculum content.

Sharing work by reading it out loud also seemed to some teachers a technique of praise, or emphasis of success, that had to be used with caution with some children who were yet too shy to benefit from the extra attention.

They were also careful in their choice of words when expressing disappointment in a child's effort or work, wary of contaminating the basic acceptance which they wanted the child to feel, of spoiling the child's trust in them.

> I try never to say to a child 'I don't like your doing that' because they only hear *I don't like you*, and then they stop listening . . . .

The same teacher's awareness of the potency of adult approval for children also emerged in her illustration of the feedback she gave when particularly exasperated by a child who could, but would not, try:

> I've been known to rip a page out of a book if I know a particular child is just not trying, and they can do better. Not very often! I'd say 'I don't like [this], and I'm sure your mum won't like and your dad won't like and do you like -'and they usually say 'No', and I say 'Well then, don't do it again.'

Here the teacher directed her disapproval to the work, and attempted to draw the child in with the significant adults in the child's life by making the child part of the adult sequence. The child was also invited to see that their self had several different aspects: the one who did, or did not do the particular work, and the one who could judge the work, and go on to do it differently.

Only one teacher mentioned a child for whom praise did not seem to work as encouragement or a marker of success: a disruptive child, often late to class, who had made little progress during the year. Yet what did get a positive reaction from the child was a tangible signal of acceptance:

> I gave her a hug one day, and she went crazy, as if she craved it, as if she'd never been hugged. She just leapt into my arms and gave me this huge big kiss. She's actually not a very huggable child - but I thought, I'll have to force myself to do this more often, which I have tried from time to time.

Second-year Teachers

The emphasis amongst second-year teachers remained on noticing or rewarding the positive, giving further practice or repetition if progress was static, and on trying to cast criticism in a forward-looking light, such as "what about including . . .". Feedback continued to be on behaviour as well as "academic" work. Most of the teachers used stickers and stamps, with 5 having systems in which so many stamps would translate into

a sticker, or a star, or a certificate to take home. While 5 would reward good working behaviour on either an individual or group basis with the treat of going slightly early for play, lunch, home, or playing with blocks, only 2 rewarded it with further school activities: one in the form of reading an extra story for the whole class at the end of the day, and another with individual time on the computer. Another teacher who had tried the latter gave it up when she found it meant "the faster kids monopolised the computer".

There was perhaps an even more public aspect to the feedback than in the new entrant year, with an emphasis on publishing work, awards given in class or syndicate assemblies, and the gaining of stars. Four of the teachers kept lists for themselves of who had had awards, to ensure that every child received one in a given time period for the work effort or product which could merit it. This practice shows both a belief in the efficacy of such feedback both for recipients and their audience, and a desire to control the unwanted effect of children drawing harsh conclusions about their own lack of potential, and then fulfilling those conclusions.

Several of the teachers felt it was good for children to carry the positive message about their effort or work home through awards and the like, even if they were dubious about the possible erosion of internalised motivation to do well. This brings out the ambiguity of such tangible feedback. Teachers want children, and their parents, as a prime source of support for the children, to know that they are making progress, so that they feel confident and willing to work at learning, and able to work independently - without the need for such material reinforcement.

The advance of the children's writing powers allowed the use of publishing as a form of feedback. Sharing children's work with one another both orally and in print as a tangible form also provided a resource for other children.

> The reward is that it's published attractively, and printed out nicely on nice paper. The other children do want to read their published work, it's very popular.
>
> If someone writes an amazing story I stop everyone and say 'right - listen to this'.
>
> If someone does an especially nice story I stop the class and ask questions of the children, what else they'd like to know about the story. The children get feedback from other children in the class, and it gives them something more to write about.

Third-year Teachers

Positive feedback remained a hallmark of the third-year teachers' approach. An emphasis which differed from the previous 2 years was on choosing the "best" child, often for application to work or good behaviour, rather than the quality of the work, and giving awards or recognition such as being allowed to take a message or choose the children for the next activity. Several of the teachers, however, rewarded group behaviour, especially concentration on work, rather than individuals. Some had cumulative systems of stickers transforming into stars or sweets (4 of the teachers used sweets as ultimate rewards). Several simply had point systems for groups, with points able to be lost as well as won, without any final pinnacle of recognition or reward such as a sweet or award. Children responded to awards and stickers with "lit up" faces. Most of the teachers seemed to accept that they were a useful way to provide positive feedback and encouragement to the children, though one teacher noted that an assembly award designed to encourage a child to finish his work had not resulted in better application, and several felt that warm words or a hug sufficed as well.

Curriculum-linked rewards included computer use, and individual handwriting tasks given on paper, while the rest of the class copied from the blackboard. Good stories were shared by being read in public; and 2 teachers thought the peer-assessment the children did for each other's spelling and stories worked very well.

The shift in some classrooms to group rewards or recognition fits with the emphasis in the aims of third-year teachers on co-operative peer relations - within a group - yet also with the need for children to work independently of the teacher, without distracting each other. Here is one potent illustration of group recognition as a classroom management tool:

> With silent reading, I give 6 points to the table that's on to it first, because you can take up a lot of time then in choosing books and settling down, they could lose 10 minutes doing that, and they'll miss out [on reading]. So this is a fun way to do it, and it's the group that gets the sticker. They remind me if I forget to count up the points. They enjoy doing it.

In most cases, groupings were of children working as individuals on their own particular reading books, mathematics work sheets, or writing, rather than actually working on co-operative projects. "Co-operation" then, was seen by the teachers as a mutual support of individually undertaken activities, rather than jointly undertaken projects.

Teachers' Perceptions of Children's Awareness of Their Progress

New Entrant Teachers

Most of the new entrant teachers felt that children enjoyed seeing they could do something that they could not do before: tangible proof such as printing or finishing a book was mentioned particularly.

> They can see progress - they can see 'my printing's getting better', and they feel they have done something they can feel good about. They're not going to say 'Because I can self-correct, I can read this.'

The teachers were divided in their views as to how much children were aware that their classroom groups reflected different levels of achievement, and the extent to which they judged their own performance by comparison with others in the group or class.

> Children look at what other children are doing. They don't think he's a bit older - they think, he's in my class, and he's good at that, and I'm not; and that's when their confidence starts going.

> Laura's[9] been a bit weepy. She's clever enough to know that others were moving on at a faster rate, and that she wasn't.

> She did come on a bit - peer pressure. You could see her eye wandering over to see what the others in the group were doing. Everyone wants to achieve. She started sticking at things more - if you could get her to sit still long enough to do something!

> Children aren't aware of the groups they're in, therefore they're not worried.

One child looks at others' more advanced work, and becomes anxious, "weepy" - a passive learning strategy; another feels provoked into making more effort. One perhaps could explain these differences by reference to differences in temperament or family

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[9] To preclude individual identification, all the names used in this report are not the real names of the children and teachers involved.

culture. But such an explanation by itself will not help the child who adopts a passive, maladaptive strategy to overcome it.

These quotations illustrate the ambiguity of some classroom messages, if taken in isolation. In the learning environment one cannot assume that all children will see things the same way: one cannot therefore assume that single practices can produce guaranteed results.

It is interesting that not all the teachers who used public recognition of a child's work or behaviour to convey "moral" messages of the value of effort to others in the class also thought that children judged themselves much by other children's rate or level of achievement. Two possible reasons suggest themselves. Some of the teachers may have conceived of their own role as teacher and adult as central to the classroom, and therefore to the children's perception. Though they believed children took note of what happened to other children, it was the teacher's own presence and initiation that seemed significant. The second possible reason is that the teachers believed that they had created a classroom ethos in which the fact that everyone was making some progress overrode differences in group membership.

The teachers who thought peers did play a role in children's view of themselves, and, therefore, their willingness to make an effort, set out deliberately to try to ensure that the positive climate they tried to create through their own feedback was not undermined by the children themselves.

> I won't let anybody say anything negative about somebody else's work.

> Children get angry when one of them doesn't work. We've got a couple here who are chronically idle, sit there with a pencil, chew it and gaze round the room, yet they are capable. Other children get cross - we've actually had to stop speaking to the child because the others start making negative comments. 'He never does anything'.

The role of children in settling each other in, and helping each other with their learning, or, conversely, the difficult children who distracted them by not working, was particularly emphasised by the teachers who used some mixed-ability grouping.

> They learn a lot from each other. I listen to the conversations when I go around, they're quite fascinating. I think they're being quite rowdy, but they're discussing whatever they're doing quite well, they're not being silly . . . with spelling, they help each other all the time. And a child remembers next time, compared to getting it from me. I really do think they learn more from each other.

There were different experiences of the usefulness of mixed-ability groups for different curriculum areas. The teacher quoted above, for example, felt they worked well in writing, but not so well in reading because "the more able make more progress than the less able". Another teacher's experience was "some kids are confident about reading the big books, and as they read, other children are drawn in".

Second-year Teachers

By the second-year, most teachers felt the children were aware of the different groups they were in. Groups, mostly homogeneous in terms of previous achievement or mastery, were used in all but one of the classrooms. There was a general sense that it was important not to allow group membership to divide the children, nor to foster a ranked awareness of themselves *vis-à-vis* others. This is certainly in keeping with the motivational literature. Opinion was still divided as to whether the children used their knowledge to judge their

own progress relative to others, or to make decisions about what they could do. Several teachers spoke of "slower" children being more aware than others; but other teachers mentioned children who noticed that the material they were reading was more "difficult" than others were tackling.

> They are aware of working in different groups, but they don't bring it up. They're not competitive. They feel that he's ahead of me, but I might get there eventually. They accept that people are at different stages than they are.

> The top group pairs with the lowest reading group. It works very nicely. The top group like hearing the others. They say things like 'I made her look back and rerun'. There are a few competitive children - whether it's their nature or home background - I was appalled once to hear a little girl saying 'We're the green group, and we're best.'

> They are aware, and you don't really break that down, though I actively try - they don't sit in their reading group, they sit with friends.

Third-year Teachers

In the third-year though there was more reward and feedback to groups about their work behaviour, teachers' perceptions of how much the groups counted for the children's judgment of their progress or confidence remained much the same as for the second-year teachers. They thought that children were aware, but unconcerned. Several of the teachers said they operated buddy systems across groups, which confused their boundaries (though not, presumably, perceptions of what each child read). Few of the teachers reported children using group membership to claim superiority over others, and we had the impression such claims were not encouraged. What emerged, however, in their description of how the children perceived the groups in the class was that children did compare themselves through differences in the curriculum materials they were using.

On the whole, this last impression is supported by what the children themselves said when asked if they liked being in their groups, and what was good about them. The children were aware of their groups, and increasingly aware the longer they had been at school that there was a "highest" group. While few seemed to have taken their group membership to heart, as a global statement of their prowess or limitations, those that seemed to be coming to some such connection were either in the highest, or lowest groups: at the edges of a hierarchical ordering.

The use of (homogeneous) ability groups in the study classrooms provides another illustration of the way in which an element which may be pivotal to one framework for progress (the performance-goal) can take on a different hue in a different context - though not lose its colour altogether.[10] As noted before, the groups in our study classrooms were reasonably fluid - children did experience personal movement between groups, and they did not find themselves with the same children in each curriculum area.

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[10] Recent material supporting mixed-ability grouping makes the same kind of point that particular practices cannot be imported "as is" and expected to work immediate miracles, without other changes in class organisation, assessment, curriculum structure, and adaptation to the particular mix of students in a class. (Gamoran 1992, Johnson and Johnson 1992, Matthews 1992, Wheelock 1992). This emphasis on "matching" innovation and institution, through analysis and action, fits well within the interactive learning-goal orientation to progress.

What Makes It Hard for Children To Learn?

New Entrant Teachers

Not surprisingly, the aims of the teachers were related to the characteristics which they identified as making it hard to teach a new arrival in their class. For new entrant teachers, these characteristics included:

- children whose first language was not English, or who spoke a restricted English;
- children who had never been asked questions, or listened to;
- lack of a range of experiences in life;
- lack of support or interest from parents;
- too much interest from parents, with unrealistic expectations that continually frustrated the child, and did not allow the sweet taste of *success*;
- children whose parents emerged from their own education with a dislike or distrust of the whole process;
- children who were afraid, or withdrawn;
- children whose main interest was in getting the attention of adults or children, no matter how aggressively they had to seek it;
- children from families under stress;
- children who had not had early childhood education, learnt how to share resources, get on with other children, fit into routines and into indoor spaces;
- children who had never held a pencil;
- children who were too confident, and would not make the effort;
- children who simply would not make the effort, and were not won by the allure of success;
- children who already think they have failed;
- children who fail to turn up every day, or turn up late;
- children whose home life is discordant with school life.

If home characteristics play the dominant role in these perceptions of obstacles to children's progress, it is because up till the first year of school the home has been the children's major learning environment. It is interesting to note that while a few teachers voiced criticisms of particular early childhood education services, the general assessment of them was positive. It is also telling that children's personalities or characters were not the major focus. When they were mentioned by teachers, it was usually in the context of the sorts of experiences, or lack of them, which would foster or enhance aspects of character. In other words, individuality was not seen as a given, and therefore immutable, but as developing through social interaction, and interaction with the products of the human, social world (such as books and blocks). It may be, of course, that to think otherwise is to raise questions about the importance and efficacy of both the teaching and parental roles.

Second-year Teachers

A third of the second-year teacher responses to this question included aspects of school life: the teacher, the teacher's relations with the children, and class organisation, as well as differences in home and school values.

> If they're constantly put down in the classroom, not reinforced for the good things they do, not becoming independent because the teacher directs them all day - if there's not a love of learning from their home, and the teacher doesn't foster it at school.

Those who spoke of the children's attitudes, confidence, and (in)dependence, often sourced these in the home.

> Attitude I think would be the main problem. An attitude that they can't succeed, or that they don't want to succeed, or that it's all too easy for someone else to do this for me rather than doing it myself. That's often picked up from home.

> There's a couple of girls who are very sheltered at home, and the brothers are allowed to roar about and carry on and misbehave - and the girls have no confidence, they're too good.

Early childhood education experience dropped out of the second-year teachers' perspective on progress. Only 2 felt that some children may simply not be "ready" for the second year of school. The lack of emphasis by the study teachers on "readiness" and ability *per se* is quite striking in contrast to American research (e.g., Durkin 1987).

It was the teachers who were either in, or who had taught in, schools with a large number of children from poor homes who raised questions of health (such as eating nutritional foods, having illness promptly attended to) and physical neglect or punishment.

It is interesting to look at the different readings of bored children given by 2 of the teachers, since they show how the context of a particular school can influence a teacher's analysis. One who taught in a largely middle-class school put boredom and consequent disruption of others down to the large class size, despite the use of in-class and cross-class ability grouping in mathematics and reading.

> We're not able to give them an interesting programme, because what is provided for them is aimed at the low-average level.

Another who taught in a predominantly poor area, also using in-class and some cross-class ability grouping, focused on the children's home-linked attitudes and habits:

> Often the children who say they're bored have been given every opportunity and are the achievers in the classroom. Their motivation is not there. They're the lucky ones, who've had as many opportunities as we can give them, and also they've had so many opportunities at home. They're not the sort of children to find an opportunity to extend themselves, perhaps because too much has been given to them.

The first teacher felt there was little in the home background to distinguish the children; and so she turned to the classroom (another teacher with a more linear, performance-goal orientation to progress could have equally turned to individual temperament or ability). The second teacher was all too aware of major differences in the homes of her children, and therefore home provision and relationships loomed larger in her account.

Third-year Teachers

Pressure on a child which undermined confidence was prominent in the views of the third-year teachers in the study. In tune with their emphasis on independence and good social (problem-solving) skills, pressure on children was now sourced as often in the classroom as in the home, and from peers as much as from the teacher. Class size also received more mention than in the previous 2 years (a third of the third-year classes had 31 or more children in them):

> The class went up from 27 to 33 - a real hassle. Amazing the difference that a few small bodies make in the room! I don't think the ones who are independent are suffering. It's hard to give each individual

child a lot of time.[11] The slower ones need more time, and some of the faster and quieter ones need it too.

36 children: you're bound to lose between the cracks the little ones without the English or the children who just sit quietly.

Change of teacher, a bad run of teachers, and, for some children, an open-plan setup were seen to have negative effects. A change in environment at school or at home, attendance, attitude, and home support were also mentioned.

Overprotective parents and teachers, dominating peers. Perhaps when they are held back from things they really want to do, or when they are pushed too far. When they are either pushed aside, or loved too much.

Only 2 mentioned ability although learning disability, an impoverished socioeconomic situation, and an ESL background were also seen by them as contributing to learning difficulties.

10,000 book children I think that is actually supposed to be an accurate thing, by the time they're 5, judging on how much they read every night. How many times they read and what their parents buy them. And take them to a library and things like that . . . as opposed to children who we've got in this school who don't have any books, like we got them to draw pictures of their bedrooms once for a mapping exercise and the number of people who didn't have books or bookshelves in their bedrooms is quite amazing. We thought they'd just left them out, but they never had them.

What Makes It Easy for Children To Learn?

New Entrant Teachers

Reverse the characteristics outlined above, and you have the teachers' views of the ingredients of learning progress. Terms that the new entrant teachers used in answering this question included: *positive, confident, willingness to try, self-determination, self-worth, rich environment.* Home and school were pulling in the same direction, showing interest, giving feedback, and accentuating the positive.

Second-year Teachers

Positive attitude and *parental support* remained the 2 major themes in the responses of teachers of children in their second school year. Parental support covered basic nutrition and health, interest, interaction with the child, particularly through language, and a broad range of experiences, but especially exposure to books.

Children who've had a good home background, lots of language - when they're learning to read they've already got a good store of language. They have parent time at home, they have lots of activities, they're not just sat in front of the TV, but the parents make an effort to do something with the children.

Positive attitude seemed to be a shorthand for confidence, interest, and willingness to put effort into school work: aspects which straddle teachers' aims for their classes, and the attributes and habits which their children could bring to those classes. Seven of the teachers also mentioned classroom factors such as class and group size, the general tenor

[11] Unfortunately, we did not specifically ask teachers what strategies they used to try to find more time to spend with individual children.

of the classroom, and the quality of its teacher(s).

> A positive attitude - home, child and school all contribute to that. But I think teachers can be vital in changing the attitude around.

> I think those 2 [sample children] are doing well because they're in smaller groups. I could have missed them in a larger group. You tend to know the kids who are away ahead, and those who are a bit sluggish, those are the ones who are a target for checkpointing.

Third-year Teachers

Good work attitudes were the most frequently mentioned aids to learning amongst the children's third-year teachers.

> A good work attitude, listening - that's really difficult. The most successful children in this class seem to be very outgoing, confident, aggressive types, especially the girls.

> Confident enough to try things they haven't tried before, step out. Obviously it helps if you've got ability, but I don't think it's the most important thing. It's how you handle yourself, how you go about achieving what you need to achieve. Independence, organising yourself, being reliable, responsible - the sort of person I would want to work for me if I was an employer.

Good listening skills were particularly emphasised by some of the teachers who did not count exploratory behaviour as amongst their aims, suggesting, perhaps, a weakening of the learning-goal model of progress as the children came nearer to the end of their initial school years. This emphasis on listening was most apparent where the boundary between junior and middle, or senior, classes at the school seemed to mark differences in approach.

It was also important to half the teachers that the children had experienced success and achievement, which were linked with self-esteem and confidence.

> An environment that allows success to happen, a receptive teacher who can see their needs and respond to them.

Good relationships with other children were also common in most of the teachers' answers here.

The Role of Parents and the Home

Teachers' views of the importance of positive feedback for children in encouraging them to make an effort and step into the unknown encompass parents and the home. But as with peers, teachers thought parents could undermine their work by lack of interest, lack of praise, insensitivity, overprotection, or focusing on what they thought the child was not achieving rather than what they were achieving: evidence of a performance-goal, linear approach to progress.

New Entrant Teachers

Most of the new entrant teachers in the study said that the parents of the children they taught did give their children the support from home which the teachers felt they needed to make progress, but in each class there were at least 2 or 3 who did not.

> Some mean well but they actually fix everything the child does, they actually correct everything they do, show them the 'right' way to do absolutely everything - that's really discouraging.

> What I'm aiming for is that they love reading. If they don't get it all right, it doesn't matter. But some

parents think it's cheating if they tell the word from the picture, and they cover up the picture. You have to educate parents. Too many children get put off from that - it can be dangerous if they're told they're no good.

The parents say the child is bored. But he's bored because he's got no initiative, they've knocked it out of him. The possibilities are there for him to extend himself in the classroom, and he won't take them. Not a lot we can do about that.

The teachers felt that sometimes parents' overexpectations were shaped by their perception of their child's ability; perhaps a little more often, by a view of how easily reading and writing are acquired.

Parents are very good at accepting the fact that children walk and talk at different ages. It's more difficult for them to accept that children read and write at different times. Every child at this school ends up reading and writing - that's it.

They want them to read just like that.

If parents are concerned about a child, their writing, say, then I invite them here to watch the programme and I explain it to them. Most parents expect full-blown adult competency by 6. If they come in, I generally get positive feedback about the work of the children . . . most of the concern springs from the fact that they really don't know what's going on.

Interestingly, none of the schools graded new entrant children in relation to each other, and few of the parents in our study seemed to be looking for knowledge of where their child was in the class as an indication of progress.

Two telling examples of the weight teachers place on children's self-esteem, or confidence, and the importance of parental support, were shown in parental approaches for information which the teacher thought inappropriate and self-defeating.

You get the parents who arrive on a wet afternoon at 3 minutes to 3, you haven't seen them for 6 months, and 'how is she doing?' and you think, 'is she above average?', and you're tying someone's shoelace, and you're putting their coat on, and the child is there.

I find it difficult to respond to somebody who comes to the door in class time: 'How's he getting on?' Because he's there, and so's everybody else, and that's when you say 'fine, no problem'.

Second-year Teachers

In addition to the parental support sought by new entrant teachers, second-year teachers looked for parents to hear their child read at home, check or help with their spelling, if they were doing some at home, and show interest - but not overinterest,[12] in their work and progress. Parents were seen as interested if they came to collect their child after school, and stayed to look at the classroom and their child's work, signed the reading books sent home and listened to the child, turned up to parent-teacher interviews, and contacted the teacher to let her know of any concerns or changes in the home. Overinterest expressed itself to the teachers through parental anxiety over a child's rate of progress, usually based on comparison with other children, an emphasis on change of group or class as a

[12] This perception that more of a good thing may make no difference, or have an inverse relationship to children's achievement, fits in with the curvilinear (nonlinear) relationship between classroom processes and achievement found by Good and Weinstein (1986). It might also mark the tension which is bound to occur at the sometimes blurred borderlines of the school and home worlds.

milestone, or a parental standard which might bear little relation to contemporary teaching methods or emphases. Overinterest translated itself into pressure on the children, with sometimes negative effects on their work habits.

Interested parents take the time to look at their children's output, they come and share concerns about home or playground behaviour. I've made suggestions to some parents about handling difficult behaviours at home, with moderate success. In this area neighbours compare children's quantity of output. I look at quality, not just quantity. I see success as being either a move along given paths, or the creation of new paths.

Some parents are overly concerned and ready to immediately blame a teacher if something does not reach their standards - usually parents whose children are extremely capable, and who progress steadily. Those at the other end of the scale are not pressured, and their parents are conspicuously absent throughout the year.

Parents wait hand and foot on their children, but they also put pressure on them to achieve. Some of them don't feel they can cope with the pressure on school work, so they don't do it.

A lot of our parents think they can teach reading far better than us. That doesn't help. They think it's done the way they learnt. They cover a picture and you memorise word lists.

I think parent education is so important, but there's just no time to do it. We probably have more parents' meetings than a lot of other schools around, we have maths parent meetings, parent meetings about reading, writing.

Parents put pressure on children to do extra things, they always expect them to be on top form . . . one parent does multiplication tables with his child, yet the child has no concepts for anything. Parents want to know if their child will go on to standard 1, as though that was the point to aim for as quickly as possible. They won't accept differences in children, and be supportive and say, Well done. If one child they know reads twice as fast or twice as many books, they want their child to do the same.

They worry about the spelling, but not the flow of stories in writing.

Earlier in the year we had parents dashing in at 3 o'clock, opening the child's tote bag, searching through all their books to see what they've done during the day and saying 'Where's your reading book?' The kids are just shaking. And we try to say to them, 'Look, the children have been at school 5 hours, they've had enough, they want to go home and have a break.'

If children don't change rooms, parents feel like their child's not moving, that the child hasn't progressed, and that's not the case at all.

Third-year Teachers

The "pushy" or well-meaning but undermining parent, concerned with linear, comparison-based, performance-goal-based success rather than consolidation and learning-goal-based achievement, remained the dominant motif in the comments of third-year teachers.

I discourage teaching at home. They're only 6 and 7, and we work very hard. If they are really slipping - and none of them are, apart from a little girl in maths - I wouldn't necessarily get back to the parents because it is an added pressure and worry on the children, and could end up in a real mess.

As a parent I would demand to have the right to look at my children's work, though they're discouraged here because they look at other children's work. Parents here are academically very interested in how their children are getting on - I think they forget about social development. They have expectations, but I don't know if they're that interested, I don't think they put a lot of time into their children. They view success as My Child Is X, and Why Isn't My Child in the Higher Reading Group. It's very much comparison, and are they top?

You can tell parents' interest from the children's attitudes, the way they talk. For example Lina talking about her mother saying she was to practise her times table. Some of the Pacific Island parents especially, they're very keen for their children to do well. They don't always know how to go about it, but they're very keen, they really value the opportunity their children are having to be educated.

In schools serving in low-income areas teachers saw that many parents had neither the time, luxury of leisure, nor resources to focus on their children's progress. But some of the teachers also spoke of working with parents on specific humps on the roads of progress, or of their efforts to outline the class programme and methods.

We had a very successful night meeting when the writing process was explained. Children came with their parents, and all but 2 parents came, and one of those sent an older relative. Parents are interested, the writing night showed that. They very quickly contact you if the reading books seem too easy - but not if they're too hard.

Some also mentioned with gratitude parents who informed them of changes in the family, or stresses at home - though one parent may not have realised she was imparting useful information to the teacher about her child.

Erica's mother stormed in one day, used abusive language - I think I have a better understanding now of why Erica has such erratic behaviour and mood swings!

Most of the teachers were mothers themselves: and several said that, as mothers, they would like to know as much as possible about what their child was doing. But what they found inappropriate were the indicators that some parents used, where their emphasis was on progress as a linear performance based on comparison, as a race against time or other children.

It's almost like there's this invisible line you have to reach by a certain age.

Parents are concerned about success but they generally see it differently, as marks on pieces of paper, comparing their child with others.

I think some of the parents ring each other up and compare notes on the children's reports and tests.

Ability and Predictability

New Entrant Teachers

None of the new entrant teachers saw ability solely as IQ measurement: they saw it as aptitude in a given area. The main indicator of ability was the speed at which something was grasped or realised. But speed of progress in the first year was neither the only nor most reliable gauge of how well a child would do later on - again in contrast to a linear model of progress. Motivation and work habits were important. Social skills and relationships, as we saw in the assistant principals' analysis of the reasons for retention, also played a significant part.

Some of the teachers felt that they had a clear grasp of a child's potential by the end of their first year at school; others noted situations or experiences which made them feel they could not always tell.

As a general rule I have a fair idea of how well children will do - how far they'll go. Some I don't - children who for various reasons don't achieve in their first year, unsettled, changed country, don't know any other children at the school. I really don't know what they're capable of, because they're too insecure and unhappy.

> The academically most clever didn't always achieve at high school because they lacked the determination, and those with lower IQ often did, because they wanted to, and they believed in themselves.

> Ones that come in on day dot, click into what it's about, they're not just at school to eat their lunch. They're aware of everything, keen to learn, keen to take responsibility, they click on to things . . . but many factors can come into a child's life that change it later: a change in school, teacher, whether the child is intimidated or there's a personality clash; family life, their own health. Yet with some children you can see that they are going to have to work hard, and some of them you can see it can be easier.

> Sometimes you get children who start off as high fliers, but they don't do best in the end, compared with the steady ones. They reach a peak, and then level out. Slower start has a more dependable outcome, and can come up past the high fliers. It's very dodgy to make general assumptions. I think by standard 2 you could tell the police the ones they'll have to watch out for when they're grown-up!

There were some behavioural characteristics that stood out in the teachers' comments on ability. All the teachers had at least one child who was "bright" but "lazy" or "doesn't concentrate" or "won't make the effort": children who could be seen as *obdurate*. Several also had at least one child who started on the back foot of narrow home and life experiences, and who remained beyond the teacher's reach through their lack of communication with the teacher, and, sometimes, their lack of connection with their peers: children who could be classed as *impenetrable*. These 2 categories of children were perhaps the most frustrating for teachers, far more so than the *plodders* whose progress was infinitely visible. When we asked teachers to say how well they thought our sample children would do in School Certificate or an equivalent form of assessment in mid secondary school, the plodders were generally given a reasonable chance, so long as they kept making an effort. The impenetrable children would generally fail - if they were still at school. Those whom teachers were most equivocal about in their estimate were the obdurate children: the children who seemed capable, but whose resistance to consistent application seemed to question a basic value of the school world.

Work habits, with interest in or high value on what the school has to offer, and confidence, figured highly in the teachers' aims. As noted earlier, though these attributes seem to the teachers to be susceptible to change, it is not easy to separate them clearly from children's inherent characteristics. It may seem like a circle to some, or, as one teacher joked:

> If a child isn't very able, it's my fault. If the child is able, then the parents are very clever.

Most of the study teachers' perceptions of the relationship between classroom experiences and children's work attitudes and characteristics fit an interactive model, where development is spiral rather than circular or repetitive. It may be for that reason that home characteristics and parental support, or lack of it, loom large for teachers who feel they are doing their best within the classroom. Conversely, as we shall see later, while parents also put some emphasis on home support in their children's first 3 years, they focus somewhat more on classroom programme and characteristics, the quality of the teacher, and the style of teaching. If children's learning progress is indeed spiral in nature, and drawing on *all* experiences, as the research literature would suggest, then home and school are in a complementary relationship, sometimes overlapping, and without clearcut boundaries. This explains some of the tension which can exist, especially where there are problems which a "partner" either cannot see, or feels unable to do anything about.

Second-year Teachers

To follow up on the role of "speed" in progress, the second-year teachers were asked whether the rate at which children learnt to read was indicative of their future progress. Some did not answer this question. A distinction was made by most of the 10 teachers who commented here between reading skills, and comprehension. They cited examples of children with a "high reading age" who faltered when it came to understanding, or whose reading skills did not translate into writing skills. Teachers at one school with an emphasis on providing a solid grounding in the junior school commented that they preferred to "expand sideways" rather than "push" children ahead. Here is a clear illustration of the difference between a learning-goal orientation to progress, which sees it as a spiral process of consolidation and accretion, crystalline, and a performance-goal orientation, which focuses on one dimension, or looks for evidence of the kind one might find in the traces of a jet plane's flight, the trajectory of a rocket.

The major indicators of later school success perceived by the second-year teachers were indeed the child's attitude, confidence, interest, and social skills (which could in total be summarised, in terms of our image of the learning child as a crystal, as the solidity and expansiveness of the crystal), and parental support and expectations.

One teacher gave an interesting description of the liveliness she took as a prime indicator: interesting because such lateral thinking would not always produce "correct" answers on, say, multiple choice tests or tests of factual knowledge to be done within set time frames.

> Children who ask questions, and give lots of lovely answers leading everywhere else as well, who don't just give the answer, but give the reason why, the ones who are thinking beyond that which is immediately in front of them. The measurable things, their reading age and maths level, are indicators, but they're not always reliable, because some children don't have any problems learning to read. When they get to the stage where it's more difficult, a question of comprehension and the other things that extend from reading, they level out, they become a good average. Different skills are required later. There are also children with 'learning difficulties' who become quite academic people later.

Seven of the teachers described children who had made better progress than they had initially expected over the chronological year. Four ascribed improvements in reading, mathematics, and social skills to the classroom work and atmosphere, or, slightly conversely, participation in the (individualised) Reading Recovery programme.

> They were quite unapproachable at the beginning of the year, and now they're the most friendly children you could ever hope for. If you can make the environment as positive as you can, and as supportive as you can, hopefully every child will start to bloom.

> Reading Recovery made such a difference. Now that they've got the learning process under their belt they are making enormous progress. These were children with no language, a lack of early childhood experiences.

One thought the stability of home was the major factor in a shy child's progress, and another, thinking of some very high running record results in reading for one child, sourced them in the child's lateral thinking. Another teacher spoke of success in bringing some children forward after realising they were not making much headway.

> Two children have maths problems, and I think that next year they will still probably need to be watched, but they are now very motivated, and they really want to catch up with the other children,

> and they really work very hard at it. So I think that their positive attitude and their desire to want to achieve and do well is going to make all the difference. I can see the gaps closing now. There are none that I think won't achieve next year in all areas - I couldn't have said that at the beginning of the year. They were children with no language, and the maths language was a foreign language to them, and they took a long time to master the objectives of the early cycles.

Thirteen of the teachers mentioned children in their class who had not made the progress they would have predicted for them. Language problems or lack of early childhood educational experience were mentioned by 4 of the teachers. Children who could not or would not work independently were noted by 3 teachers. Family stress was the major factor mentioned in 2 other cases. While several children who had been through Reading Recovery made better progress than initially expected, teachers at another school each noted a few Reading Recovery children in their class who had slipped back or remained static.[13] Three of the teachers wondered if their programme was appropriate for the children who had not made progress.

> Their previous teacher was very good at teaching maths, and she really had the children working at their individual levels. She allowed children to move ahead with confidence, she didn't hold children back in the group. But she is an extremely experienced teacher, she had the skill to do that.

Third-year Teachers

Concentration and confidence were the main indicators for the study children's third-year teachers of how well they thought the children would do in their later school life.

> Some have gone up a [reading] group, and some have eased off, levelled off. You get some slow ones who suddenly shoot away. Because of their own attitude: they have suddenly realised they can do it.

> Attention span is a good indicator, whether they are good listeners, a child who can keep working irrespective of what's happening around them, a child who shows some dedication.

Concentration was linked to speed for several of the teachers. Speed allows more rapid coverage of curriculum, if children can proceed at their own pace. Yet, as in the first 2 years, speed was also seen as a potential trap: 4 of the teachers had children who seemed to have moved too fast to develop their comprehension, or who had stopped making an effort because it seemed "too easy" - and who might be said to be too confident!

> I've had brilliant children who are reading at the 12- and 13-year-old level, but they're misreading the word completely out of context, and they make no attempt to go back and self-correct it. Interestingly every child who comes from Australia's like that, they just look at the word in pure phonetics, and that's it. That child with the 13-year-old reading age has actually got a need that perhaps a 5-year-old at emergent level hasn't got if they're realising that something doesn't make sense.

Two felt predictions were not possible at this age, and one illustrated this with children who had suddenly made rapid, unexpected progress. Parental support was mentioned also by several of the teachers.

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[13] Glynn *et al.* (1989) in their study of Reading Recovery urge "more careful attention to articulation between Reading Recovery and classroom reading programmes" (p. 134). Perhaps that was the missing factor in this one school.

> There's every indication, I mean you look at a child who's coming from a very supportive background, who's got all the books and experiences and talking to and everything that they need . . . the only thing sometimes with all that, that they're too closeted and maybe they're not going to achieve any independence. If they've had books at home, if they're well cared for . . . . And also this independence thing, and their attitude, their curiosity, really alert children who have almost got a sophisticated older child interest in things.

Interestingly, only one teacher at this level stressed the role of social skills.

Twelve of the teachers had children in their class who had made more progress than the teachers had expected over the course of the year. Some of these were individual children who had responded to individual attention from the teacher, with parental input. Children coming out of Reading Recovery in one class "accelerated" their learning through a continuation of one-to-one attention from the teacher. A child from a Cook Islands family took off in his writing after his teacher suggested he expand his story about the Cook Islands by talking with his father. Her analysis was that the increase in parent involvement through work which was of interest to both father and child gave the child the motivation for school work which he had lacked hitherto.

Group responses to particular emphases in the class programme were identified by some teachers as major factors in children's unexpected learning gains. One teacher emphasised the importance of effective teaching and assessment. Two others gave illustrations of class programmes which they associated with more widespread improvements.

> Some have improved in language, not the amount they write, but in what they're actually writing. I'm hoping it's part of the policy I've got in my class that the meaning is the most important thing . . . they're starting to say when they want to write a letter 'When I publish it, can you photocopy it so that I can put one in my publishing book, and send the other copy to the person I wrote it to?' So they see the purpose. They've also written a co-operative play, and they can't wait to put it on for the rest of the syndicate. The number of kids who never did speak up much and who are now speaking out - it's great.

> I thought at first the boys were really quite bright, but the girls have accelerated at maths as well, they've caught up and extended themselves, it's really clicked in the last few weeks, so they're really getting on with it - I can't keep up with them! ...
>
> No, I didn't do anything special with the girls, but we did more hands-on work with the equipment, we used charts, and we did a lot of talking and moving of equipment before we put the work down in the books. I think that clarified things for them, they could see things happening. It's been good for the slow ones too.

Thirteen of the teachers had children in their class who were not making the progress they had thought they could at the start of the year. The main reasons given were their lack of confidence, effort, or independence, usually sourced in the home, through parents doing too much for their children, expecting too much of them, or, the other side of the coin, not taking sufficient interest. Parental tensions were perceived to be another contributing factor.

Again, it is interesting, indeed sobering, to find teachers sourcing lack of progress outside the classroom rather than within it. It may be that their explanations were made after a school year of trying different strategies without success. Or it may be that the teachers were not in the habit of systematically grouping children (on paper) by their own expectations of progress at the beginning of the year, and using that grouping as a tool for reflecting on their classroom organisation and practice as the year proceeded.

3 DISCUSSION

There are 2 major themes which emerge through this material on teachers' perceptions of progress in the first 3 years of school.

- The predominance of a learning-goal orientation amongst teachers in the study, and their uneasiness with people whose starting premise in looking at children's learning was couched within a performance-goal orientation.

- Although teachers in the study thought that they could make a difference to the kinds of behaviour that they associated with progress, such as concentration and persistence, they also sourced many of the factors which support or impede children's learning progress in their other world, the home.

What Does Research Say?

The research literature certainly supports the teachers' orientation to progress.[14] What does it have to say about the importance of the home in school achievement, including a decision or ability to give the child early childhood educational experience ?

> Good enough, ordinary parents probably have the same effects on their children's development as culturally defined super-parents . . . children's outcomes do not depend on whether parents take children to the ball game or a museum so much as they depend on genetic transmission, on plentiful opportunities, and on having a good enough environment that supports children's development to become themselves.
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> The idea of good enough parents is a constructive step toward recognising that parents do not have the power to make their children into whatever they want, or in John Watson's (1928) terms, to ruin them in so many ways (Scarr 1992, p. 15).

The importance of language-rich experiences, and children's active involvement in a range of different kinds of experience before coming to school is well supported by the literature (e.g., McNaughton 1987, Reynolds 1991). Also generally supported is the relationship between the resources a family can draw on to provide children with such experiences, including parental interests, and parents' own educational career, and the child's ability to make the most of school (e.g., Tiedemann and Faber 1992).

Early childhood educational attendance is valuable because it can widen the cognitive and social scope of children's experiences (e.g., Clarke-Stewart 1991).

Inasmuch as 1-parent families have lower incomes than 2-parent families, the research literature suggests that it can have a small effect on children's educational achievement (Milne *et al.* 1983). The break-up of 2-parent families also appears to have some effect, not always large, on children's school achievement. This effect varies in relation to the degree of tension in the family, the gender of the children, any greater home responsibilities taken on by the children, and the duration of its effect (Allison and Furstenberg 1989, Mulkey, Crain, and Harrington 1992).

Some of the differences between school and home which the study teachers perceived as obstacles may have more to do with the lack of easy fit, or transference, between the two worlds. (Goldenberg 1989, McNaughton *et al.* 1990, Tizard *et al.* 1988). Children for

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[14] *See also* Alton-Lee and Nuthall 1992, Baert *et al.* 1988, Crooks 1989, Dweck 1986.

whom English is a second language, for example, cannot take advantage of their own language experiences at school as easily as children for whom English is also the home language.

Lack of fit would also occur where the home environment stressed a performance-goal orientation to progress, or acceptance of behaviour, if school environment promoted a learning-goal orientation in its environment - and vice versa.

Some differences between early childhood education and school curriculum organisation can be strongly apparent in children's initial school behaviour - their adaptation - yet have little discernible influence on children's school progress.

That children gauge something of their progress from their parents is clear from our data. The question is really whether parental expectations communicate themselves to children in ways which affect their confidence and willingness to make an effort. An analysis of the way some children who had made rapid progress in their first few years of school reached a plateau or lost ground (Phillips 1987) indicates that parental assessments of their children and expectations can have negative effects. The corollary is also true. Unfortunately, the study did not contain sufficient material on the classroom environment to analyse whether or not the classroom environment contrasted with parental ways of assessing children, which appeared here to be based on a performance-goal model of progress and competence.

The Phillips study also underscores the fact that initial progress may not hold up as the school curriculum alters from the acquisition of skills and opening up to the new worlds that literacy reveals, to demand more abstract, conceptual work. Her conclusion that it was children who had not learnt to press on after making a mistake - who had not learnt to, or who dared not, take risks - who would falter, and perhaps fall away, fits within the learning-goal framework.

Future research questions arising from this work would be whether children (and adults) can become "multicultural", using different orientations in different environments (such as school and home), or whether the learning-goal orientation can supersede a performance-goal orientation in all environments. Given the widespread social use of performance measurements, one suspects that the first alternative is closer to actuality.

Most of the teachers' perceptions, then, are borne out by the research literature: but not in a deterministic, fixed sense which is unamendable to intervention. Some of the intervention is possible within the classroom - as the teachers' own efforts bear out. Some interventions work when attention is paid to ways to overcome the lack of fit between home and school, or, to put it another way, to enlarge the common ground the child experiences, so that skills and knowledge are transferable between worlds. Examples in this study include the teacher who saw the value of a Cook Islands child writing about his family history, thus tapping parental interest and resources. Or the opportunity that a junior school "performance" day offered to a somewhat too careful child to bring into her school life the movement she was capable of in her jazz ballet lessons.

The last example is an important one: it was the child who took action, in a context which allowed it. Another child who used her parents as advocates initiated her move from a J2 classroom to an S1 classroom, where she did very well. Children, as McDonald *et al.* point out (1992, pp. 14-15), negotiate their learning environments: they are not simply passive sites of effects.

Some of the interventions which could improve children's learning would need to occur in other areas of society which are beyond teacher and parent control: areas such as health

and living standards,[15] and opportunities available for wider experience, such as affordable early childhood educational experience of good quality, and family and child ability to participate in the world outside the home, such as paid work, recreation, and community activities.

What do children themselves bring to the school experience and environment in terms of genetically based talent and temperament? Talent has perhaps been measured too often in the research literature by general ability tests, some of doubtful reliability with young children. A study by Alexander and Entwisle (1988) gives a major role to temperament in analysing progress in the first 2 years of schools in Baltimore: mainly in terms of the speed with which children are able to come to grips with the new classroom environment, and therefore make use of it. Three shortcomings of this work are: a reliance on teacher ratings of children's temperament (which, judging by the data from teachers in this study, may reflect the classroom environment and structure as much as the individual children), a lack of information on the classroom environments and resources that the children went into, and a lack of information about parenting styles and values.

Scarr (1992) distinguishes between temperament, as something inherent and relatively unchangeable, and the skills which, in her example, enable a shy child to interact successfully with others. This is an important distinction, which echoes distinctions the teachers themselves were making in their emphasis on the importance of social skills, and in their acceptance that as teachers they had a role to play in providing working environments, and ways of working, which allowed children to develop concentration, persistence, and useful communication skills (such as talking about the story one was going to write).

In this study, we did not ask parents questions about their own parenting style, which is another factor in children's orientation toward achievement (e.g., Wagner and Phillips 1992). It does seem to us from our material that children whose "nature" was accepted by the adults around them, but who had or who were given guidance to develop the social skills needed to negotiate their classroom, were in a much better position to make or sustain progress than those whose social skills were seen as largely immutable. That social skills are important at this stage of schooling for both the peer and adult interaction which help learning, is borne out by Bullock (1988).

Parental contact with the school is also important in children's learning progress. What form it takes is as important as its frequency (Anderson *et al.* 1988). It is clear that parental interest translated into regular contact with the school, keeping informed, and ensuring inclusion in some decisions, such as promotion, also has an impact (Lareau 1989, Toomey 1989). Lareau also shows how (middle-class) parents who were comfortable in the school world were far more successful than working-class or unemployed parents in mobilising school resources to improve their child's performance. Successful parental intervention in our study largely consisted of changes of group or class, rather than changes to curriculum or teaching methods, which would require larger changes, some beyond a school's control.

The kind of impact that children in the same classroom have on each other's learning

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[15] International comparative studies show the significant role of health, poverty, and expenditure on education in children's levels of achievement (Elley 1992, pp. 33-36, Jaeger 1992). Similarly US research shows links between achievement differences between states or communities and their expenditure on education (e.g., Childs and Shakeshaft 1986, Fitzpatrick and Yoels 1992, Wise and Gendler 1989).

would seem to vary according to the structure of the classroom, the nature of curriculum activities, the classroom ethos, and the size of the class. Parents and teachers are very conscious of class size, and see it affecting children's individual access to the teacher as a resource and, through its demands on classroom management, "time on task". The research literature on the effects of class size supports the link between class size and academic progress, particularly for the initial school years (Mortimore *et al.* 1988, Podmore 1992).

"Time on task" is a core tenet of the research literature on educational achievement. Recent research has gone beyond the simple equation of more = better to start to explore the quality of the time on task. Several recent studies emphasise that students' cognitive processes and their motivational sources are better guides than classroom observers of their engagement with work (Peterson *et al.* 1984,[16] Rohrkemper and Bershon 1984). The latter conclude that children's ability to tackle difficulties in new work rather than panicking, or doing nothing, owes much to their teaching environment:

> ... the classroom teacher is a crucial factor in the educative process and it is through this instructional environment that students develop facilitative inner speech, which encompasses both learning and motivational constructs, and as such is the basic tool of learning. (p. 146)

Again, this research underlines the value of an approach to learning progress which is learning-goal rather than performance-goal oriented. This approach sees the child developing into his or her own resource as well as being able to actively and successfully respond to other "external" material and resources.

Classroom management strategies are also found to have a bearing on student engagement with work (Goldstein 1979, Mortimore *et al.* 1988, Weinstein 1983). Goldstein's categorising of different approaches is a particularly useful one, inasmuch as her analysis emphasises that most teachers blend several different, but related approaches. In this study, we found that teachers who seemed to have a learning-goal orientation were incorporating practices such as stickers and homogeneous-ability grouping which belong more logically to a performance-goal orientation. Goldstein concluded that a group-process approach (summarised by her as "the central task of the teacher in this approach is to establish and maintain an effective, productive classroom group") and a socioemotional climate approach ("effective management is largely a function of positive teacher-student and student-student relationships") enhanced student time on task, whereas authoritarian and permissive approaches had negative or no effects on it, and instructional and behaviour-modification approaches had equivocal effects, depending on the other strategies used by a teacher. Her findings also fit with the "curvilinear" relationship between classroom practices and effects on achievement discussed earlier. Most of the classrooms in our study used management approaches that would fit with the more effective approaches outlined by Goldstein.

The emphasis by the teachers in this study on "home" factors, factors beyond their

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[16] ". . . student engagement in mathematics, as assessed by classroom observers, was unrelated to student achievement. Students' reports of their understanding of the lesson and their cognitive processes during classroom instruction may be more reliable and valid indicators of students' classroom learning . . . .

"Our findings also indicate the importance of students' reported affective thoughts as mediators between instructional stimuli and student achievement and attitudes. In particular, students' negative evaluative self-thoughts may be potentially debilitating both in terms of student achievement and attitudes." (Peterson *et al.* 1984, p. 512)

control, would only be misplaced if they were entirely passive in the sphere for which they do have responsibility, the classroom. We did not gain that impression at all from this study. What did become clear to us was that, as for any of us, good intentions can sometimes be mistaken for good outcomes. We can see great value for teachers, children, and parents alike from teachers not taking themselves for granted, but systematically reflecting on their classroom practices in the light of the progress of the children in their care. To do so would, of course, need some uninterrupted time of a kind which is rarely found in New Zealand primary schools. Mortimore *et al.* (1988) noted that the good-quality schools in their London study allowed time for teacher development and non-teaching time. Very little non-teaching time was regularly available to the teachers in this study for such analysis; this reflects the national picture reported in Wylie 1992 (pp. 120-121), where only a third of ordinary teachers had any such time, and if they did, it was usually for less than an hour a week.

4 THEMES IN THE CHILDREN'S PERSPECTIVES

How the Children See Themselves

In our interviews with the children in the study, we asked them which groups they were in for reading, mathematics, and writing, whether they liked those groups, whether they thought they were good at these things, and what reading, mathematics, and writing activities they did at home. Not every child answered every question, or said much more than the name of their group, or a "don't know" to our probing for the reasons for their judgments of themselves or their groups.

First Year

Children in their first school year can and do gauge their progress. The landmarks they use are tangible: groups, activities, letters they can print, length of story they can write or read, size of the print they can read (the smaller the harder), whether they can read the books they are given, whether they can finish stories in the time available, and the feedback given them by teachers and other adults. Some use of the activities or groups of other children in the class as landmarks was also beginning for children who were not with their friends, or for children who had been in the class longer than others, who could look back on the groups they had passed through. It was the activities they mentioned, and how interesting they found them.

None of the children appeared to have come to a judgment about their own or others' ability in a global sense, seeing their progress as a measure of something innate, unmovable: the kind of judgment that is associated in the research literature with lowered achievement, and unnecessarily curtailed progress. Only 5 children showed some awareness that the groups they were in signalled progress, and 3 of these were all from the one class in the study where group names corresponded with the reading levels themselves. That classroom provided a situation much closer than the other classrooms in this study to the American awareness of grades and comparative ranking, because their frequent appearance on classroom walls makes them as available to children as they are to adults. Thus they can easily enter into children's internal discourse about what they can do, who they are, and what they can become.

While friendships entered into the study children's judgments about the groups they were in, they had only an indirect link with the children's self-assessment of progress. The importance of friendships for many of the children, however, raises questions for future research on the role of peers and the effects of ability grouping, in the New Zealand context, on children's progress in the new entrant year, and on their perceptions of their own progress in relation to their willingness to try and persevere.

Second Year

The landmarks that the children were using to comment on their progress in their second year differed for each curriculum area. In reading, they talked of the words they knew, being able to read "hard" or "longer" books, and reading at home. Children who had been through Reading Recovery used some of the "jargon", and talked of "sounding out". In mathematics, a significant reason given for judging oneself good at it was being orderly and tidy in getting the BSM activities out of their box, putting them away, and playing at

the activities without teacher help. Higgins (1992) argues that such activities are not without their use as learning situations, as children sort the resources, and count them. Other reasons for children thinking they were good at mathematics (and all but 3 of the children asked this question thought so) were that they could do a current activity, or that they could count. In writing, the main landmarks were spelling, story length, and legibility.

There was more inter-child comparison in the curriculum areas where the children were grouped, more awareness of the "highest" group. Certainly the children shared an underlying perception that to make progress was to move on to "harder" things, or to find things one had done too "easy". The writing area seemed to have more dimensions than others on which the children could see and gauge progress. Yet, to an adult, the children's accounts of frustration at not being able to spell (both in school and at home, before the significant figures of teacher and parent), having to get help, and then not always being able to read what had been written raise a certain awe at the barriers which children must cross to reach the adult, literate world. How many of us must confront, let alone overcome, our own ignorance or mistakes every working day?

Third Year

There was more awareness overall in the children's third year of getting things "right". Ticks loomed larger for most of the children in their summation of themselves as good at something than did stickers or stamps. "Hardness" as a criterion to show progress became even more prominent. The recognition of correctness came largely from teachers and parents. While the children were working more on their own, still the need to know whether they were correct kept them "dependent". In writing, however, range of stories emerged as a new criterion for achievement.

Ability was emerging as a separate concept for some of the children, mostly those in the highest groups, but it was not widespread. Perhaps some of the children who said they liked their group because it had easy work, or thought they were slow, were coming to the same concept by a different route. But most of the children were still using mastery measures such as getting things right or moving on to harder materials to decide they were good at something.

Discussion

Children in this study did gain ideas of how well they are engaging in various school activities from both mastery and comparison. The comparisons take different and changing forms through the first 3 years of school. Size counts: of word, book, page. Then it is overlaid with comparisons with now "readable" standards: are my letters like the "b" and "s" on the board? Is my "is" like the "is" on the page? Can you read my story like you can read that story out of our box?

The standards and comparisons change over curriculum area, and over time, linked to recent experiences. Thus the girl who was one of the most adept producers of interesting stories in her class could say she was not sure if she was good at writing, because she got a lot of words wrong that morning. That weighed more than the background of steady ticks, written praise, publishing, and having her stories read aloud to the class.

Different children "read" the signs of achievement or the journey ahead in different ways. Sometimes this depends where they are on the journey. In the second year of school, the "highest" group loomed larger to someone not in it than someone who was in it. But by the next year, membership of it added a glow for some children. Some of the

children judged themselves by the wobbliness of their handwriting; others by their spelling; still others by whether they managed to finish the story in time.

It is not clear from our data whether these different emphases primarily reflect the bent of the curriculum, classroom teacher, parental emphasis, or the child's interest and temperament: or, as befits the interactive model of progress, a live amalgam of these factors.

"Bananas Can Change into Pears, Because We Used To Be Them": Children's Awareness of Ability Grouping

Awareness of ability groups was also multidimensional. The perception of *interesting* activities seemed sometimes to override perceptions of where classmates were placed, but less so in the third than in earlier years. Group names had a power beyond providing a bare means of reference: children sometimes wanted to be in another (lower) group because it bore the name of a popular television programme ("Ninja Turtles", one year, "The Simpsons" the next). One could see this as a clear sign that the children have picked up the school message that things must be read, that they mean more than they seem; that these children were living, as their teachers and parents hoped, in a meaningful world! Friendships straddled groups, and had new entrants in particular looking wistfully over their shoulder.

The conclusion from the American literature is that ability grouping is a significant shaper of experience, academic self-concept, and academic achievement (Rosenholtz and Simpson 1984b give an excellent summary). This material from New Zealand children shows a different picture. The reasons for this are likely to be differences in classroom organisation, assessment, and teacher orientation to progress. The children in this study were often in different groups for different curriculum areas, in no groups for some activities, and classes usually - but not always - covered a wide range of "ability". Assessment was largely curriculum and mastery based; and results were usually given in a private, non-comparative form. The markers of children's progress in American classrooms appear from the research literature to be more standardised and public: even at this early stage of school life to be graded, to have the grades or ranks displayed on walls, and to have comparisons made between children seem natural as a gauge to learning progress.

Perceptions of progress, and links between various practices and effects thus need to be seen within their particular context or setting.[17]

In this respect, it is interesting to compare our material with the American material indicating a decline in children's perceptions of their competence (Frey and Ruble 1987) and a shift in children's concepts of achievement at around the age of 7 and 8, reading it as an indication of ability rather than their earlier associations with effort. Our New Zealand material indicates only the beginnings of such a shift.

Again, we can go back to the structure and nature of the context within which children are learning to understand the reasons for the difference. One American study (Rosenholtz

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[17] An illustration of the importance of looking at practices in their context is given in the report of the long-term negative effects for ESL children in Britain, where teachers took their ESL status as indicative of learning difficulties, placed them in low groups, and sought higher test marks than white pupils before moving them on to higher-ability groups. As the report notes, the gaps this created between ESL children and their peers were compounded by rigid streaming, or the solidification of ability groupings year after year (*Times Educational Supplement*, 10 April 1992, p.7).

and Simpson 1984a) shows that children in classes where the curriculum is more individualised, or differentiated, are more likely to link achievement with the concept of effort rather than ability. Rosenholtz and Simpson link this in turn with the fact that is harder to simply and publicly rank children within more differentiated programmes, which the New Zealand classrooms in this study resemble.

Differences in classroom structure and management styles are also linked in other studies to children's internal "locus of control", that is, the feeling they have some personal control over, and effect on, their successes and failures (Greene 1985, Stipek 1980, Walden and Ramey 1983). Again this fits with a spiral rather than linear model of progress, one based on learning goals rather than performance goals.

Other studies (e.g., Ames and Archer 1988, Stipek and Daniels 1988) have looked at the relationship between achievement and attribution - attribution based on learning goals and assessment emphasising mastery (effort linked), and attribution based on performance goals and normative assessment (ability linked, achieving success with little effort, gauging oneself in relation to other children's standing). They have found that mastery, rather than performance goals and assessment, enhances the achievement of children in their first years of school. Again this underlines the emphasis placed by most of the New Zealand teachers in our study on recognition of individual achievement, and on not fostering an inter-child competitive classroom environment. But it goes against the grain of some parents' search through comparisons of their own child with other children for evidence of their child's achievement.

It would appear then that there are cultural and structural differences that mean that New Zealand children may come to the (unhelpful) association of achievement with ability rather than effort later than many American children. The next research question for New Zealanders is to find out when and in what contexts New Zealand children lose this valuable connection.

5 PARENTS' PERSPECTIVES

Among the questions we asked parents of the study children were: what their child liked about school; the aspects of school they talked about when they were at home, including groups and stickers or stamps; the factors that helped children progress; their own expectations of their child's initial school progress; and how they thought their child was doing at school.

Settling in

According to their parents, all the children liked going to school. Seven of the 30 said their child had had some initial problems settling into school as new entrants: 3 because their child knew no one else in the class. Other reasons given for children finding it difficult to settle in were because they had been "top dog" in their (overseas) school class, were "clingy", or were not used to a structured environment.

Aspects of School That Children Talk About at Home

First Year

New entrant parents were more likely to hear about their children's play activities and which friends they had played with (or not played with) than their school work. The children of the 6 parents who heard about school work ranged across the spectrum of speeds at which they were progressing, as did those whose children liked to mention out-of-the-ordinary events (ranging from use of a computer to children's misbehaviour), and singing. Parents remembered hearing about the groups their children were in when they moved. Reading groups were most often mentioned. The latter bears out the indications from the children's interview material which suggests that while groups were used by them as landmarks in their learning movement, they provided individual staging posts.

While children appear to give very little description of their day-to-day classroom work, one wonders if a similar question of the aspects of work which adults mention at home would show a comparable pattern of focusing on the tangible, the unusual, or the eventful, and on people's social relationships.

Stamps, stickers, ticks, and smiling faces were appreciated by all the parents as well as children, and children usually displayed them with pride - but not always immediately.

Second Year

Parents heard more about class work from their children in the second year of school, particularly theme or project work, what the children had written about, and what they and other children had said at sharing or news time. More of the children went on school trips or had visitors to the classroom than the previous year, and these were often the topics for home conversation. There were similar levels of talking about friends, play, out-of-the-ordinary events, groups and movement between groups, and what the teacher had said. Critical comments as well as positive were reported. A few of the parents noted that their children often had to be asked about their day, or asked specific questions.

> You've got to really prompt him to find out what he did during the day. Unless there's something that really sticks in his mind - like the fire engine came today.

If I make a wrong assumption about a group he'll correct me, whether his best friend is in it, say. It's background information for him.

She talked about the maths challenge, talks if the teacher comments on a good story. I've never heard her try and rank kids in any way or rank herself, though she's competitive in sport.

He didn't like being moved to another maths group because he didn't know the teacher or the children.

Often she can't tell you what you want to know. She talks about what the teacher says, exciting things, new subjects, themes, when she recognised that numbers were following a pattern, books she's read, songs they're singing.

It depends what time of day I ask her. When she gets home she's pretty tired, and doesn't say much. But when we sit down and have dinner together, she'll often talk. They all talk about what they have done during the day. She talks about what they're doing rather than people. The things she's made, or what she's writing about.

Most of the parents saw stamps, stickers, and awards, and approved of them as either positive reinforcement or incentive. Only 3 felt they could rebound on those who got less, or be overused.

Third Year

The parents of the third-year children made even more mention of their children's comments on how they and others were doing in their class work. Their children's interest in particular subjects also seemed more marked - a child would talk about what they had done in mathematics, but say nothing about reading, for example. Theme or project work, and what teachers had said (to other children as well as to the child) also figured, along with the perennial theme of play and friendships.

Parents' Expectations and Notes of Progress

First Year

Parents wanted their children to be able to do some reading and writing independently. Most of the parents of new entrant children had no specific or fixed expectations. Most expected some movement, some evidence of learning, and the extent of this was usually related to the length of time their child had been in the classroom at the end of the calendar year. A couple thought their children should be able to do simple addition but, in the main, there was little mention of mathematics, perhaps because the "milestones" in the first few years of school are less obvious or tangible. Those whose children did not have English as their first language, or who had language or hearing problems, wanted them also to understand spoken English and be understood when they spoke it.

As covered in the second section of this report on assessment and reporting practices, parents drew their ongoing picture of their child's progress through material coming home, such as reading homework, workbooks, and art and craft, as well as through how well their child read to them, shaped letters, or wrote cards and stories. While most of the parents said they heard their children read, only a few deliberately augmented school work through their own teaching. Those who did were all from non-Pakeha households. Several mothers from European cultures worked with their children on printing, 3 Indian males gave their children times tables to do, and the men in a Samoan extended family gave the children in the household comprehension exercises on Samoan-language material.

Four of the parents expressed some concern about aspects of their children's progress, all noting either little change in their child's reading books, or in their reading to their parents. Two put the lack of movement down to their child's behaviour: one thought the child memorised, the other that her child was lazy.

Parents noticed improvements during the first year in their child's oral language as well as in the grasping of reading and writing skills and interest. Independent reading and decipherable writing, whether fluent or not, was a particular milestone for parents.

About a third of the children also seemed to be reading and writing on their own initiative at home; and about two-thirds undertaking craft or construction activities.

Twenty of the parents mentioned a factor which they thought had a bearing on children's progress in their first year. Six talked of the qualities of the teacher: encouragement, enthusiasm, knowledge of their child, the "likeability" of the teacher. Five talked of the need for individual attention, or small classes. Another 5 looked beyond the classroom to parental support and encouragement. Three focused on attributes of their children's behaviour: 2 spoke of their child having had to learn to share and get along with others, and 1 of the importance of a good attitude to school. One mentioned the value of the peer tutoring which her son had experienced in the classroom.

Second Year

The main themes amongst the expectations of the parents of second-year children in the study were that they should be advancing in their reading, and making the same progress as their age peers. Parents assumed that teachers would alert them if this was not the case. A fifth mentioned specific goals in mathematics, and these ranged from counting up to 20 and knowing home address and telephone numbers for several Pacific Islands children, to "using numbers as abstract concepts" from several professional parents. Spelling was mentioned by a fifth: progress was being able to spell, or spell more words than previously. About the same proportion also emphasised social aspects: mixing with others, having friends, tolerating differences. Happiness and effort were mentioned by a few, one hoped her child would be doing some project research, and one thought a good grounding included knowing the rules of sports.

Evidence of the children's progress came through the work they brought home to do in reading and spelling, in the written products they bore home, and teachers' written reports. Parents also talked of children beginning to use reading and writing for themselves: reading something from the newspaper, or from a television title; and writing lists of words, or letters and cards to relatives. Most of the parents had also talked with their teacher in the formal parent-teacher interviews, and some on a more informal basis. A few had been involved in more deliberate efforts to improve reading or behaviour.

Progress in reading was identified by parents in longer words, sentences or books, more fluent oral reading, enjoyment of reading (such as taking books to bed), and expanded oral or written vocabularies. Most parents had seen some movement, and most were happy with it. Parents of the 6 children who had been through Reading Recovery were unanimous in their praise of the programme, associating a noticeable improvement in the children's reading with a better attitude to school and, for 2 children better behaviour.

Progress in writing was noted in improved spelling (getting more words right, getting longer words right, or fewer wrong), more legible or neater handwriting, and, for some, in more complex stories. Some parents had hoped their child's writing would be neater than it was.

Only a few parents spoke about progress in mathematics specifically, and they looked primarily at number work, mainly counting.

Twenty of the parents spoke of factors which helped children's school progress. The main themes were parental interest, supportive and stable home life, homework (especially that involving parents), good links between home and school, good relations with other children, a variety of learning experiences, reasonably sized classes, and good quality teaching.

Third Year

Most third-year parents expected their children to be able to read fluently by the end of the year - or, as one father put it, "to have broken the back of reading". Their expectations in the mathematical realm ranged from "simple sums", through "the times table", to an understanding of concepts. Spelling was important to some parents, who mentioned "lists of basic words". For others, what mattered in writing was the production of more complex or coherent work. A third of the parents now mentioned social skills, "getting on with others". Remaining happy, enjoying learning were also each mentioned by about a third. A few mentioned developing imagination, or finding out an area of special interest.

Keeping "up" to the level of peers remained a common theme, joined by comments on doing well on measurable aspects such as the times table.

More specific comments were made by parents on their children's progress over their third year than in previous years. Perhaps this was because they felt their children had come to the end of what one called the "foundation" years. Perhaps comparisons with adult standards became easier to make, and the differences more pronounced because the children could now, largely, read, write, and deal with numbers. There were a few more comments too about children's attitude, and effort.

The main factors which parents felt helped children make progress were the quality of the teaching - interesting, challenging work; the personality of the teacher, or whether the child liked her; and interested parents and a stable home (whether nuclear family or not). A fifth of the parents focused mainly on characteristics of the child. Homework was less mentioned than the previous year, perhaps because it had now become routine.

Discussion

There was certainly more of the linear and performance-goal model of progress to be found in parents' comments, but few of these parents gave us the feeling that they had entered their children in a race against time or other children. Most seemed to see their children "warts and all", though there were one or two who sadly saw only warts, and some who perhaps thought that going to school was enough in itself to produce an educated person.

Why is it that there was a difference between (some) parents' and teachers' models and understanding of children's progress - a difference which impairs communication between the two worlds of school and home, and can unnecessarily impede a child's learning progress? We suggest several reasons.

First, parents are used to their own child: the child is not someone who has to be explained, or put in context, for a teacher. Therefore they may be more likely to think of a child in terms of inherent temperament and talent.

Second, parents are several steps removed from the rich day-to-day experiences of the classroom, and see in their children's work brought home, and teachers' reports, only the outline of what teachers and children know more substantially (albeit differently). It may

be because, unlike teachers, they do not know the shape of the journey, or where it will pass: what the curriculum is, and why it is taught the way it is, how the different activities cohere. Teachers have bridged the gap between their own schooldays and contemporary approaches to learning through their initial training and continuing staff development work. It should be noted that the majority of the parents we spoke to made favourable contrasts between their own schooling, and their child's classroom and what they knew of the programme, seeing more variety, more interest, and more attention to the individual.[18]

Some of the teachers in this study were inviting parents into classrooms to observe their programmes in an attempt to try to bridge such gaps. How this is done is probably more important for its ultimate effect than the fact that it is done. We had, however, no examples in this study of teachers visiting children's homes to talk about the class programme, or to see what resources there might be drawn on to bridge home and school.

Third, the precarious economic climate has heightened some parents' anxiety that their child should "measure" up to a highly competitive work environment. Lateral thinking, problem solving, and cognitive strategies may all seem luxuries in a world where qualifications, however little they have to do with work content, provide the first hurdle to an application for a job. Nonetheless, they are vital to children's long-term learning progress, and to adult competence in all spheres.

It is no negative judgment of parents to conclude that, as with teachers, best intentions may produce unwanted results, and that more than individual good intentions will be needed to bring both home and school resources together to quicken and enliven children's learning progress.

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[18] Middleton and Oliver (1990) found a similar positive valuation amongst school trustees.

6 DIFFERENCES IN CHILDREN'S OVERALL PROGRESS

Patterns Associated with Different Rates of Progress

In their third school year, almost all the children in this study could read simple material, produce some recognisable writing which made sense to other people, had grasped the concept of patterns, and learnt to look for similar attributes of colour, shape, and size in different things, and vice versa. They knew numerals to at least 20, and could perform some simple operations on them, such as addition and subtraction. They were at home in the structured classroom environment, and could make better individual use of its various resources than they could as new entrants (*see also* McDonald 1992b, pp. 65-75). Their classroom interests had changed, as had some of their out-of-school pursuits. In short, all the children had moved further and enlarged their capacities: they had progressed.

Yet some children produced work of a more complex nature than others, and comprehended and devoured more written material, of greater diversity. This section explores some of the home and school characteristics which emerged from the study as having some association with different rates of progress in the starting years of school. Because of the qualitative nature of our data and the fact that we did not choose our sample on the basis of groups matched on social characteristics and preschool achievement, or choose children who would be representative of the classrooms from which they came in terms of social or competence characteristics, our focus here is not on arriving at statistically confirmable generalisations, but on the illumination of the processes of progress, and the perceptions of children, parents, and teachers about those processes which could provide clues for successful support for children.

It is nonetheless of note that the key social associations brought out by analysis of our data are (only too) well supported by quantitative studies: the association of lower school achievement with lower socioeconomic status, and different home language or culture from that of the school.[19] Differences in school resources do not emerge so clearly in this study as they have elsewhere, largely because the 10 schools in our study had similar resourcing for teacher:child ratio and classroom materials, and did not organise their classrooms in very different ways. Teachers' approaches and values also had more in common than they had differences (or, to put it another way, the differences did not show a diverse range).

Analysis

In order to analyse differences in progress, we categorised the 30 study children for whom we had full data into 3 groups, "high", "medium", and "low" achievers, on the basis of their performance on reading and mathematical tasks in their final interview, and their performance as visible in a sample of their writing given to us by teachers at around the same time.

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[19] New Zealand had the highest gap between the achievement levels of students speaking the school language and those speaking a different language at home amongst the 32 countries taking part in the IEA study of Reading Literacy. (Elley 1992, pp. 60-62). Elley notes that countries like New Zealand, with a relatively small proportion of students whose home language is not the school language, are less likely than other countries to make provision for them; he suggests additionally that although Pacific Islands students, who then made up much of this category in New Zealand, valued education, their literacy traditions were "often not strong".

Why 3 groups? We found in our field work that teachers and parents alike seemed to use a threefold distinction - whether the terms were based on a concept of "middle", or on speed (high fliers, average, slow). A threefold categorisation was also likely to provide sufficient numbers in each set to enable us to develop a reasonably clear picture of the process of progress, and of what might be involved.

Reading

Reading performance was analysed by the fluency with which children read a book or part of a book they chose themselves, and their retelling of what they had just read (*Reading in Junior Classes*, 1985, pp. 122-123). Weight was given to their comprehension as revealed by the retelling. The children were sorted into 3 groups (6 in the most advanced, 10 in the middle group, and 15 in the least advanced).

Mathematics

For mathematics, we gave the children the set of 4 numerical tasks (numeral recognition; counting to 110; pre-recognition; and subtraction, identified by Jenny Young-Loveridge from her research as key indicators for 7-year-olds of subsequent mathematical progress (Young-Loveridge 1991). The actual ages of the children at their final interview ranged from 7 years 1 month to 7 years 11 months, with a mode of 7 years 5 and 6 months. These mathematical tasks were scored out of 21. Scores ranging from 19-21 were judged to be high (15 children); scores from 18-14 medium (9 children); and scores of 13-9 judged low (6 children).

Writing

The writing samples were analysed using a model of writing development suggested by the University of East Anglia's Beginning Writing Enquiry Group in their 1984 publication, *Learning to Write and Teaching Writing 5 to 9 Years*. The first level had been surpassed by all the children in the study. Levels 2 and 3, initial collaborative text-making and initial independent text-making, received a low score (15 children); level 4, further collaborative text-making and revision of text, a medium score (8 children); and levels 5 to 6 associative writing and collaborative text-making and revision towards unified writing, a high score (7 children). Details of the levels are given in Appendix 3.

Overall Categories

Each child received a score of low, medium, or high for each of the "3Rs". Their 3 scores were then combined to group the children into the 3 categories of low, medium, or high achievers. The categories formed by combining such scores give rather coarse, but for our purposes, useful distinctions.

The 8 children grouped as "high" achievers were making rapid progress over all. They either had high scores in all 3 areas (4 children: 3 girls, 1 boy), or high scores in 2 and a medium score in another (4 children: 2 girls, 2 boys). The 10 children categorised as "medium" achievers had 2 medium and 1 high (5 children: 2 girls, 3 boys) or 1 low (1 child: a girl) score, 3 mediums (only 1 child: a boy), or 1 high, 1 medium, and 1 low score (3 children: 1 girl, 2 boys). The 12 children categorised as "low" achievers had received 3 low scores (6 children: 2 girls, 4 boys), or 2 low, 1 medium (6 children: 3 girls, 3 boys).

The chart on the next page shows how these groups differed in terms of school achievement data in reading and mathematics, and their social characteristics.

CHARACTERISTICS AND ACHIEVEMENT LEVELS OF THE THREE PROGRESS GROUPS

Researchers' group	3rd Year Age Range	3rd Year Maths Level	3rd Year Reading Level	Mid 2nd Year Age Range	Mid 2nd Year Maths Level	Mid 2nd Year Reading Level
"HIGH" 8 children **Gender** 5 girls 3 boys **Ethnicity** 7 Pakeha 1 part Pakeha English not first language - 0 Socioeconomic status - **Mode**: professional	7.2 - 7.11 **Mode**: 7.6	Beginning New growth S1 - New growth S1 & S2 **Mode**: New growth S1	8 years - 14 years **Mode**: 11 years	6.1 - 6.6 **Mode**: 6.2 - 6.3	BSM cycle 4/2 - New growth S1 **Mode**: cycle 4/5	5-7 yrs [red 2 - pt.1 journals] **Mode**: 6 years [purple, gold, hungry lambs]
"MEDIUM" 10 children **Gender** 4 girls 6 boys **Ethnicity** 7 Pakeha 1 Pacific Islands English not first language - 1 Socioeconomic status - **Mode**: skilled-professional	6.9 - 7.6 **Mode**: 7.4	BSM 8 - New growth S1 **Mode**: New growth S1	6.5 yrs - 9 yrs **Mode**: 8 years	6.0 - 6.5 **Mode**: 6.1	BSM 4/2 - BSM 8 **Mode**: cycle 4/5	5-7 years [blue 1 - sweet porridge] **Mode**: 6 years [purple]
"LOW" 12 children **Gender** 5 girls 7 boys **Ethnicity** 5 Pakeha 3 Maori 3 Samoan 1 Asian English not first language - 4 Socioeconomic status - **Mode**: semiskilled	7 - 7.7 **Mode**: 7.4	BSM 6 - New growth S1 **Mode**: New growth S1	5 - 7 years [magenta - gold] **Mode**: 6 years [blue]	6.0 - 6.7 **Mode**: 6.2 - 6.3	BSM 2/3 - 5/3 **Mode**: cycle 4	5 years [emergent - blue] **Mode**: 5 years [yellow]

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7 LOW ACHIEVERS

Family Characteristics

Eight of the 12 children in this group lived in 2-parent nuclear families during their first 3 years of school. The parents of one child separated in her second year; another family experienced temporary separation and marital difficulty. One parent who had been sole gained a partner. One child whose mother died shortly before the study began lived in an extended family based on his much elder brother. None of the children were single children. Their number of siblings ranged from 1 to 5, with 2 being the mode. Birth order showed no clear pattern: 3 were the eldest in their family, 5 came in the middle, and 4 were the youngest.

In terms of ethnicity, 5 were European/Pakeha, 3 Maori, 3 Samoan, and 1 Asian. The latter 4 did not have English as their home language. Half the children had 1 parent full time at home. Most of the working parents had semiskilled work; 2 were in professions; 1 in unskilled work; and 2 received state benefits. Three lived in Housing Corporation flats.

Most of the children had had some early childhood educational experience, mainly in (nominally free) kindergartens. Those who did not have English as their home language seemed to have irregular or brief early childhood educational attendance. One child had spent a short period of time at a language nest in her own language.

School Resources

Nine of the 12 children in this set came from 3 of the 10 study schools. One of these was located in a low-income community, with a high proportion of ESL pupils. The 2 others served low- to middle-income families, with some ESL pupils. There were no great differences between the schools in terms of class size, or grouping practices. The children's classes were all single cell, and most remained with the same teacher.

Children's Perspectives

First Year

The 5 children in this group who told the interviewer what they liked about school in the first year all mentioned playing, whether outside, or inside, sometimes with mathematics puzzles. One boy said "Making guns at the maths table with all the blocks, and drawing." Another boy said "School's good because heaps of people know me."

Of the 4 children who would prefer to be in another group, 2 found their own group too noisy or naughty, 1 thought the other group had more enjoyable puzzles (for mathematics), and 1 wanted to be with her friends. The 2 children who elaborated on why they liked the group they were in both explained that they could do the work:

> Our reading is easy; the other group is too hard.
>
> Because I can guess the words.

Half the 12 children thought they were good at mathematics or reading; but only 1 thought he was good at writing. Reasons for their positive judgment of their performance in mathematics and reading ranged from being well behaved, to getting stickers, or "I can

do a lot of things. Those who did not think they were good at one of these made comments such as:

> I don't like the independent box - all the stuff you have to do, it's too hard. I prefer the maths games.
>
> [Writing] just is hard, and I can't do.
>
> I haven't been reading lots of times.

Second Year

Playing was still to the fore in what children in this set liked about school in their second year. Five of the children mentioned drawing or colouring in. One child liked having books to read, and writing; one liked story time; another liked the news. Dislikes were cleaning up, waiting, rough play or bullying, hard work and "hard words".

The main reason why some children would prefer to be in another (ability) group than the one they were in was the presence of friends in it, or children in it having "better" games in mathematics. One child would like to be in a "higher" group, but thought his own group was "good because sometimes we've got easy work." However, Julie expressed an attraction for "hard" work:

> I like it [reading group] because we've got more books and I've got heaps of friends in it. But I'd like gold, you have got to work hard there . . . [writing group] isn't good because people talk to me and I just keep saying 'No', because the teacher said that you got to work very hard.

Most of the children thought they were good at reading. Their reasons ranged from "my dad told me" to going "up" a group, or reading at home as well as school. Kent said in the first term that he was not good at reading "because I can't read books much" but expressed more confidence in the third term: he was good "because I like reading books and they're easy to read. I'm not good at reading real big books." The 2 children who were not sure of their reading performance mentioned that they did not know "some words".

By contrast, only 5 of the 12 children thought they were good at writing. Their reasons included parental or teacher comment, filling their notebook ("because I'm only 1 page over in my book, and it's nearly Christmas"), being able to copy words, and:

> (first term) because I can spell everything but not large ones.
> (third term) because I can write good stories and draw pictures good.

Of those who were unsure of their writing, or did not think they were good, the reasons ranged from "I can't spell whatever I want to spell", and "I don't know some of the words I write" to quite specific terms, as in these observations from Julie:

> (first term) I can't do stops in the right place.
> (second term) I'm not good at letters, at writing the letters and sounding out the letters.

Most of the children were confident in their mathematics. Two girls, in different schools:

> I'm very good at getting the little boxes out of the bin in the right order.
>
> I take out our box and I always clean up.

One boy had learnt a way around:

> I sneak at Lou's words and I always copy him - he gets his right, and I don't, sometimes I get it wrong.

Essie said mathematics was fun, and though she did not like "hard words, hard puzzles", "I do it a lot, sometimes I practise at home."

Third Year

Of the things they did at school in their third year, two-thirds of the children best liked art work (including drawing and colouring in) or "making things". A third liked playing. Two liked reading, one printing, and one "you learn things, how to spell." Writing or "hard things" were disliked by half the children. Also mentioned by one each were physical education and cleaning up.

The status of their group was important to half the children when they commented on whether they liked the groups they were in for the "3Rs". Four of the children were proud that they were now in the highest, or second-highest group for reading or mathematics in their class, though they sometimes also wished they were in groups with their friends.

> We get to do special things because we're the highest and sensiblest.

Whether the work was sufficiently easy was important to half the children, though not for each topic.

> All the stories what we read, I've read most of them.

> I don't like the hard work, but someone's helping me. I like the pluses and take-aways, but not the divided-bys, because they're too hard.

> I'd like to be in an easier group next year. They keep on doing their [BSM activity] boxes, we have to do sheets and hard work on the wall.

Another 3 liked their groups because they had a variety of activities and levels of difficulty, and 2 were pleased that they were in a group that did harder work than others, or "long stories".

> Because we do hard journals, they're quite easy, and the words are good. I don't like it when we have easy books and easy 'a' words. I prefer to be in Simpsons, because of the name, and I like the people.

Beverley said of her group:

> It's bad because we've got the naughtiest boys. But it's good because you can win Snap from people who don't know how to play the rules.

In assessing their own performance, the children used as gauges length, neatness, and, in mathematics, correctness. An interesting note for sociolinguists is that, for children, "little" words and "little" books often meant "harder" - as do "big" words and "long" stories. Some children arrived at positive assessments of themselves which acknowledged that they made mistakes or preferred not to do some activities; for others, these same things led to tempered or negative self-assessment. Since the research literature suggests that such self-concepts can reflect differences in parenting styles, parent-child interaction

and parent teaching of children (e.g., Wagner and Phillips 1992), we wish that our study had been wide enough to encompass these aspects of home resources.

At our final interview with them, three-quarters of the children thought they were good at reading, 2 thought they were good at some reading activities, but not others, and only 1 thought she was not good.

> I'm good because I read heaps of books at home, and I've got journals at home as well.
>
> Because I can read long words. I don't like long books: too hard, too many hard words.
>
> Because the teacher says I am.
>
> Because my Mum says.

These children were less confident about their progress in mathematics (7 thought they were good), and writing (6).

> [I'm good at writing because] . . .
> most times I only leave one letter out. I do vowels.
> I'm neat.
> I write well, I write middle size poems.
> sometimes I write long ones. I like writing plays, you get to start new lines, then I can turn the page quicker.
>
> [I'm good at mathematics because] . . .
> I can do pluses on the board.
> I've got brains and I work hard.
>
> [I'm not good at mathematics because] . . .
> sometimes we get crosses.
> sometimes I can't play some of the games.

Only 3 of the children changed their perception of whether they were good between our first interview in April, and our second in November. Essie felt worse about her reading:

> (first term) My teacher says I'm good at reading.
> (third term) Not very good. Because most books have got little writing. I can't read little writing, it's too hard.

Beverley felt better about her reading, but worse about her mathematics:

> (first term) [good at mathematics] because I do it a lot.
> (third term) not good because I get the times table wrong.
>
> (first term) not that good - 'cause when I make mistakes, Mrs Bell says 'NO-AH'.
> (third term) good, because I read to myself.

Jerry felt better about both his reading and mathematics:

> (first term) I'm not very good at reading. Sounding out the words would make me a better reader.
> (third term, after Reading Recovery) Good, because I did a test with [Reading Recovery teacher], she said I'm good, and my friend said I'm good. I got all the big words right.

Some of the children showed quite an awareness of what might be involved in making further progress:

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[*Researcher:* What would help you be better at reading?]
A lot more spelling tests what I hate, and more sounding out letters - I never do that.

[I'm not good at writing] . . .
because I just keep the same stories.
because I'm not good at putting full stops and finger spacing.
because it's not very long.

Teachers' Perspectives

First Year

Two of the children, whose home language was not English, had erratic attendance. Three had mild speech impediments. Most of the children mixed well, with some sticking to 1 or 2 close friends, and others having a wide circle. Only 1 child seemed to his teacher to lack social skills.

Most of the children were making the progress their teachers had expected when the children first came into their class. Reasons given for those who were not were problems with language (usually because English was not the home language), lack of relevant prior experience, usually with books or print, the child's erratic attendance, or inability to "sit still and concentrate".

The teachers who took part in the survey had mixed feelings about our asking them to rate the children's ability, often telling us that they did not think of the children in those terms, and that such terms were not helpful. However, they were good enough to couch their overall sense of the children in our terms. Only 2 of the children were described as below average in ability. The rest were described as "middle of the class", "as capable as anyone else". One boy whose home language was not English was seen as "bright, but doing average work because of his language". These are the sort of quick summaries that parents would be likely to get from busy teachers.

Second Year

By their second year, 4 of the children in this group were thought by their teachers to be low in ability. Four were thought to be above average in mathematics. The teachers associated language difficulty with the low performance of children whose home language was not English, and for those without much early childhood educational attendance. Irregular attendance or lack of sleep thought to be due to late bedtime, leading to poor attention and lassitude in class, were also linked to low performance for such children.

Low performance for European/Pakeha children was, in contrast, associated by the teachers with lack of confidence, fear of taking risks - departing from the known, the correct - and, in one case, a strong temper.

In commenting on the children's progress and on the obstacles which might prevent them from realising their full ability, the teachers focused mostly on the children's school behaviour - daydreaming, not listening (teachers having to repeat themselves), not concentrating, distractibility, or slowness, for example, in not finishing writing pieces. One salient feature in their comments about the children's writing was that their stories were repetitive. The children stuck to the words they knew and could spell and to the topics they had already tackled successfully.

As a gauge of the teachers' view of the long-term school outcomes for the children, we asked them to say whether they thought they would pass School Certificate, if the

exam still existed when these children reached the fifth form. Their teachers thought just over half the children would pass, but expressed doubts or qualifications over the others: the children would have to work hard, have family support, and "set their mind to it".

Most of the children's families were seen as supportive, in that they had come to the parent-teacher interviews, sent homework back and forth, and, in about half the cases, helped with class trips, school events, or in the classroom. Two families were seen by their children's teachers as well meaning, but not helpful, in that they were unable to give the child useful backup to school endeavours either through their own lack of literacy, (a European/Pakeha family) or because they seemed to the teacher to place more emphasis on the child's role of dutiful daughter (a Samoan family).

Four of this group went through Reading Recovery in their second year, and another child was considered to be a possible candidate. One child also had regular Individual Education Programmes planned for him.

Third Year

Two of the children were thought by their third-year teachers to be below average in their ability; several of the children were described as "bright", which might have meant either quick, or spirited. None were now described as being above average in mathematics. Two children (compared to 7 in the second year) were thought to be clear passes in School Certificate; 3 (2 with English as a Second Language) were seen as not passing; and there were question marks or qualifications over the remaining 7. As well as the previous emphasis on the need for these children to work hard and get family support if they were to succeed, the third-year teachers also mentioned the quality of their teachers, and the children's concentration.

> She probably talks too much, but she usually gets on with it. Very obedient child. She would need good teachers.

> He should do well at School Certificate. He comes from a conscientious family, he has the right attitudes, he wants to achieve - but he will need that family support. English as a second language is the main obstacle.

> Her work is good, but she's easily distracted. A bit immature, a bit scatty. Her work would improve if she channelled her energy into it rather than minding everybody else's business.

> He's bright, a good general knowledge, but easily diverted. A shortish span of concentration. Hasn't progressed as quickly as I would expect someone of his ability to. For School Certificate, a lot would depend on the type of teaching.

Four of the children had made less progress than their teachers expected. All 4 had "bright" characteristics: they were quick, assertive, or humorous.

> Perhaps I expected more because he is a quick bright little button, and because he tries so hard.

One whose reading had improved after Reading Recovery surprised his teacher by "forgetting a lot of his writing skills".

The children's school behaviour remained the dominant feature in teachers' comments: children were not concentrating, not listening to instructions; they were tearing into the work or trying to be the first to finish, without "planning". Other themes were that the children did not persist in their work, needed teacher attention to start or continue (or finish), and were easily distracted. Only 1 child seemed to have a tiredness problem. It is

interesting that the parents of the children whom teachers had found "tired" the previous year were now noting that their children were more interested in school now, as they mastered some of the skills.

> She likes to work independently, but she needs to be watched, as if she doesn't understand she won't clarify things.
>
> She has a positive attitude to writing, but she finds it difficult to sit still for a long time.

Some children were averse to taking the risk of getting unknown words wrong in their reading or writing. The repetitive nature of stories was again mentioned, sometimes in relation to sentence structure and vocabulary, and overlapping vocabulary, topic. The teachers felt the children were more restricted than others in their experiences out of school, and had less "general knowledge". (Conversely, general knowledge could pick up the quality of a child's writing or reading.) Language problems continued to be seen as an obstacle for children with English as a second language - in mathematics as well as in reading and writing.

> She writes copious home-based stories, well formed writing. Stays strictly within the confines of what she knows, which isn't very much.
>
> John can't put words in the right order to make a sentence. He knows that it doesn't make sense. He avoids writing if at all possible. He can't stay on task for more than 5 minutes. He has been known to move a sticker from previous work and put it on the work of the day to gain approval . . . he often writes incorrect [mathematical] answers, but he can tell you the correct answer when he's questioned. His work is neat . . . his progress in reading is erratic and inconsistent. It's hard to know whether he memorises stories. He's keen to read, tries really hard. The inconsistency makes it difficult to identify problems.
>
> He now sees unknown books as exciting challenges rather than the old 'I don't know that one' (I can't read it). He needs prompting to take risks and try unknown words using the correct strategies he has learnt . . . he has begun to write at length. Has had a change of attitude since being put with the older writers, where he sees the way they write and the kinds of stories they produce. Needs to break away from the familiar patterns and secure topics. Unwillingness to risk using new words and inventive spelling.
>
> Beverley is really wary if she thinks a book may be too hard for her. Has a block with well known easy words. Often has her mind made up how a phrase will go, and finds it hard to think of an alternative word that would make sense and look right . . . she's always keen to start writing, soon runs out of steam, gets distracted. Has great difficulty spelling; gets frustrated if she can't remember what she's written.
>
> He doesn't often choose reading as [choice] activity; loves finding out information though. He writes unusual stories, has quite an adult, corny sense of humour.

Three of the 12 children went on Reading Recovery in their third school year. Another child, after parental intervention, was given some one-to-one attention, based on Reading Recovery techniques, and moved into a higher performing class. In all, 7 of the 12 children in this group had Reading Recovery intervention during the period of this study.

Two of the children's parents had had little or no contact with the teacher in their third year. Two of the parents who had had contact with the teacher were also thought to neglect their children; in one case, physical abuse was suspected. Three parents had worked with the teachers to improve their child's progress or behaviour.

In 5 cases, the parents were seen as supportive only in the sense of "well-meaning".

Their children's teachers felt their lack of education, lack of English, or financial or emotional difficulties prevented them from realising their good intentions. Two of these families did not have English as their home language; 3 did.

Home Resources and Activities

Parents' Activities

Seven of the children's parents reported that either they or their partner read the newspaper regularly. Six read magazines; 4 also read novels, or books borrowed from the public library on a regular basis. Both parents in 2 Samoan households read, and read to their children from, books in Samoan. Two of the fathers were noted as reading work material, including catalogues. Bibles were prominent reading material in 4 of the households.

The main written activities of parents that they thought their children would see were (shopping) lists, writing cheques to pay bills, doing household accounts and, for half, writing letters. Parents in 4 households also wrote reports for work or for church, prepared lessons, or wrote computer programmes.

Library Visits

All the children went regularly to their school library, and children at 2 of the schools were also taken as class groups to the local public library weekly or fortnightly. Four of the children went to the local public library once every week or fortnight; 2 went once every 3 weeks (the length of the city library's borrowing period), and the remaining half did not use the public library. This pattern of library use was almost unchanged in the second year. Children who had older siblings would often go with them, and 1 child stopped going when an older sibling changed schools and was no longer available for such trips.

Four of the children continued to go regularly to their local public library in their third year. Another 4 went from time to time, often with their older siblings, and 4 did not go at all. Of particular note is the older sibling whose reason for going to the library was to do homework; and that in 2 of the households where library visits were not made, the adults did not read much, if anything, themselves.

Reading: First Year

Six of the parents heard their children read from their reading folders brought home from school several days a week or more in the first year; the other half did not. Only one parent thought their child could read to themselves: most said their child tried to, or looked at the pictures when they handled books by themselves. Their children's main writing activity at home was tackling the alphabet, or copying.

Reading: Second Year

In the second year, 8 of the children read books from their reading folders at least several times a week. Two of the 4 children who did not read regularly to their parents had 2 or more younger siblings, and 2 were in homes whose first language was not English. All 4 were on the "turquoise" level (beginning fluency) of Ready to Read, while most of the rest in this group were at the "gold level" (end of fluency). Two of the children did pick up other reading material at home: comics, the newspaper (in one case for its pictures), and one said:

When you get home it's too boring, so then you can read books.

The parents of these children said they or one of the children's siblings read to them, with material ranging from the Bible to Little Golden books. One with 3 other children under 5 did not:

It's difficult to find time to listen to him read or read to him. If I had a free moment I wouldn't feel like it. So he reads to himself, and I help out if he hasn't known a word. It makes him more determined if he has to read to himself.

Reading: Third Year

Four of the parents read books regularly to their children in the third year. Half the children were reading to their parents the books they took home from school, though the frequency varied from "most nights" to "twice a week". Two of the children said that they "looked" at books.

I just look at books - sometimes I pretend I'm reading a different story.

Most of the other children were widening their reading sources, though several mentioned only their school reading material. Other reading material mentioned by the children were magazines, TV guide, dictionary, encyclopedias, and school notices. Several children also read to their younger siblings. The main mathematical activity at home continued to be counting, from "how many leaves have fallen from the tree", to "counting in 2s and 10s to 100". One girl distinguished between counting coins and counting money: "I go 1, 2, 3, to 6, how many I've got, but that's not really counting money."

Home Teaching: First Year

Six of the parents mentioned some teaching activity with their children in their new entrant year. Two were keen that their children should maintain their home language, Samoan, and had oral question-and-answer sessions or read books to them. The parents of another child whose home language was not English, had high hopes that the child would be sufficiently well educated to enjoy a professional occupation as an adult, and spent time on English word recognition, and printing in English. General good manners, being tidy, or carrying out some household chores were mentioned by a third of the parents. Two girls were learning how to cook and sew. One child was learning to play chess. Only 2 children went to regular organised activities outside the home or school, 1 to a church group once a week, and 1 to gym lessons.

Home Teaching: Second Year

Home teaching in the second year continued to centre round non-Pakeha language and culture for 5 of the children, tidiness, discipline, and domestic skills for the girls. Two of the parents did mathematical addition and multiplication, and 1 taught his child how to use the computer.

Home Teaching: Third Year

There was an emphasis on the home languages and culture of those whose first language was not English. Four of the children went to specially organised school sessions in their parents' home language. Some of their work involved memorising oral texts. Three parents

mentioned teaching their children how to tell the time ("so he knows when to come inside from playing"; "You've only got so much of it; you've got to try and claim your time, to make it as profitable as possible"). Others were teaching their children "to be a good person to everybody", to act safely around tools or fuel, to play the piano, to cook, swim, and ski. Two parents expressed doubts about their own teaching abilities, one citing a short temper, the other a perfectionist streak. Two of the parents were concentrating on schoolwork, one getting their children to write for an hour a day during holidays and also memorise times tables, and another, the times tables.

Home Activities: First Year

Four of the children played computer games at home (3 boys, 1 girl). The main mathematical activity at home reported by the children was counting ("how many things on my wall", "how many Ninja turtles I've got", money, milk-bottle tops). Two used a calculator sometimes, and 8 played with Lego.

Home Activities: Second Year

Colouring in ranked with Lego as the most popular home indoor activity in the second year. A third of the children liked drawing, playing with toys or dolls, playing board games or cards, or watching television. One or 2 children each mentioned puzzles, card games, singing, praying, and making things.

Five of the 12 children's favourite TV programmes were action shows; 4 liked cartoons; 1 a quiz show, 1 Disney videos, and 1 the news.

Outdoor activities ranged from "playing outside" - tag, hide and seek, running around, "lions", and in one case "fighting with my sister"- to elastics (jumping through and over a circle of elastic wound between the legs of 2 other girls), skipping, climbing and fort building, using swings and slides, playing with a ball, and games with rules such as cricket. Two of the children had bicycles, and 1 a skateboard. Four of the children mentioned swimming. Three of the children now had regular organised activities: ballet, Keas, swimming and gymnastics lessons. Two other children had tried activities which they did not like (ballet, soccer). Three of the children also went to Sunday school regularly.

Home Activities: Third Year

Most of the children had broadened their range of home activities in the third year. Watching television was the most frequent home indoor activity (reported by 11 of the 12 children), closely followed by making things, and colouring in or copying. Lego use had declined to 5 of the children. Seven of the children played board games or cards. Half played computer games, and 2 of these also used the computer for some word processing. Four played with cars, animals, or toys. Four children did some writing at home, mainly cards and letters, but 1 to finish stories started at school, and another "because Mum says I need to learn how to write properly". Two of the girls mentioned cooking, and 2, cleaning. (Most of the children had some household responsibilities ranging from keeping their room tidy to setting the table, taking rubbish out, or vacuuming.)

Five of the 7 boys now played rugby. Three had bicycles, 2 skateboards. Other activities the boys mentioned included making hide-outs, climbing trees, using a trampoline, using a trolley, making and throwing mud bombs, and tracking down golf balls on the edges of the local golf course to sell to the golfers. Of the girls, 2 continued to play tag, hide and seek, and informal ball games (as did all the boys). One went to gym, swimming and ballet lessons; another played tennis, and made hide-outs with her brother.

Parents' Participation in School Activities

Ten of the 12 parents had been to the parent-teacher interviews in their second year and 5 had been into their child's classroom. Several helped in the school, making lunches, mending books, transporting children on trips. One had attended a session for parents outlining the Beginning School Mathematics programme, and a Samoan parent stayed in the classroom for the first hour on several occasions to see what happened. Several had had informal discussions with the children's teachers about their child's work, and 1 participated in Individual Education Plan meetings every 6 weeks.

Parents' Perceptions of Their Children's Strengths and Weaknesses

First Year

The strengths of the children mentioned by new entrant parents were mostly that they were sociable, "likable", and got on with other children. Specific skills mentioned were drawing, dancing, and, in one case, reading. Only 4 parents could think of areas where their children were "less strong". These were reading, sports, swimming, and mathematics.

Second Year

Physical agility, strength, and energy were noted by the parents of 5 of the children in the second year; 4 mentioned 1 or more of the "3Rs", 3 the social skills and likability of their child, or their skill in drawing, painting, or craft. Two found their children very helpful with other children and adults. One each mentioned imaginative play, musical ability, and a logical mind and moral awareness.

Though the second-year parents seemed to be satisfied that their child had made progress at school, half thought their child was weak at either reading, writing, or mathematics. Behaviour such as "not listening" and "very changeable behaviour, fairly obedient at school, not so obedient at home - she can be so sweet, and so naughty!" was mentioned as a weakness by 4 of the parents, and lack of tidiness by 1.

Third Year

Three third-year parents did not answer our question on their children's strengths, and any weaker areas. Of those who did, the pattern of physical agility or strength, social skills, and craft activities was continued. Two children were seen as particularly sensitive and creative. One was thought strong in mathematics and 1 in verbal skills. As in the second year, school work was the main area of weakness, followed by behaviour.

Parents' Perspectives on Their Children's School Progress

The parents were positive about the classrooms their children were in, often comparing them favourably to their own primary schooling, which had been stricter and narrower, with fewer activities.

First Year

Like most of the parents we spoke to, the parents of these 12 children had no set idea of what progress they thought their child should be making in their first year of school. Those who did mentioned reading, and their main gauge of progress was the reading brought home by their children. Most were satisfied that their children were making headway; 1 thought her child was reading "very well". One whose home language was not English had

been most concerned about her child's pronunciation of English, and she thought this had improved.

The comments from the 3 who were not sure about their child's progress:

> It's a bit early yet to say. Progressing in the books he reads, but I'm not sure about maths, because it's done at school.

> They say he's reading. I wish they would be more honest - though he has recently improved dramatically. I expected him to read simple books fluently, be able to count and subtract, be able to write letters you can read.

> I expected him to read and print a bit. I haven't noticed any progress yet.

Second Year

Apart from 1 second-year parent who felt unsure what children of this age should be achieving, all the parents had seen marked progress in their children's reading.

> She likes reading books more. She seems to be above average.

> Occasionally I used to read with her, but she's got so good I don't need to sit with her.

> She's doing all right. I don't understand why they don't learn ABC. She's improved, but reading is still really hard for her.

They were more tentative about mathematics, and saw it mainly in terms of "sums". The few comments made about writing, were mainly concerned with legibility. Several also noted a growth in their child's enthusiasm or willingness to tackle school work. Most had expected to see improvements - books getting "harder", or children reading on their own. Other expectations mentioned by several were being able to do simple sums, and know numbers so that children could remember their own address and phone number, and for children whose home language was not English, being able to speak English clearly. One father also wanted his son to "play a particular sport - know the rules of a game".

> She's better at reading and understanding books, there's been some improvement in her handwriting. After 2 years of school she should be able to read, and she can do that; to speak and pronounce words, and she can do that. Should start learning maths and use things like blocks to start adding.

> I'm pleased with his report, a big improvement in reading, writing, and maths. Though I notice he reads by the pictures. He's average or below in maths. Mind you, I don't expect him to be brilliant because the others are slow too.

Third Year

While all the parents thought their children were making progress in the third year because they saw improvements in their work, or saw them showing more interest and enthusiasm as they could achieve more, only 3 were now entirely satisfied with the level of their achievement. Most of the parents seemed to have these criteria in common in assessing their child's achievement: writing a coherent, legible sentence with correct spelling; counting (unspecified; one mentioned 20, one 50); and knowing the times table (level unspecified). Neatness was also important. Some parents used the practical example of whether the child could identify themselves and where they lived. Several parents mentioned other aspects which they thought the curriculum should cover at this age: social skills, computer skills, and domestic skills.

His work still looks pretty messy, though it shows some improvement.

He likes more things, he's getting more interested. He's done very good on writing, improved on reading, talks more now - and listens more. I think he should be reading more; should be able to write a letter, address it properly. Have sense in a story. The spelling is very poor here.

Sorting out arguments and things with friends, she should be able to do that. She should be able to do adding up and things on her own. It's pretty good if they can sit and read, entertain themselves - she's done that occasionally. I think they should know a bit more about punctuation - that probably comes with age, developing handwriting.

She does write some stories, they're getting better - they are sentences. Maths is coming along too finally.

She's not reading and writing as well as I thought she would be - bit slower than the other children [in the family]. She's clicked into counting, and dealt with the behavioural problems. She should be able to say who she is, where she lives, where she's going, write out her address for you.

There's been a dramatic improvement in his attitude. He's getting more help at home with his maths and reading. I think he's coping, on the borderline, grey level, but he has improved, so I feel he will do better as he grows older. He should be able to add to 50, do the times table for 5, read fluently, write neatly. He can add to 30, he knows the times table to 6, but he's not reading as fluently as I would like. His sentences don't make sense in writing, though his writing is neater than some of the standard 3 and 4 children I take for Sunday school - I don't know how their teachers can understand their writing, it's like a doctor's!

Parents' Perceptions of What Helps Children's Success in Their First 3 Years of School

We asked parents in their last interview what they thought children needed in order to succeed at school. Most emphasised the quality of school teaching, and a good relationship between the child and teacher: the happiness of the child. Several mentioned homework, or "practice". A third mentioned parental interest in their children's school work and progress, and a couple mentioned experiences which extended children: challenges and small classes allowing individual attention.

8 MEDIUM ACHIEVERS

Family Characteristics

All 10 children in this set came from 2-parent families. One child lived with her extended family. Two of the children came from Samoan households, though only 1 did not have English as her home language; the rest were Pakeha/European. Four of the children's parents had professional work, 4 semiskilled or unskilled work, and 2, skilled work. Two of the mothers worked full time, and 3 part time. Family size ranged from 3 to 15. Modal number of siblings was 2. Their early childhood educational experience was slightly more varied than the previous group: half had been to kindergarten; 3 had been to playcentre or playgroup; and 2 each to childcare or preschool attached to an independent school.

School Resources

The children in this group came from 6 of the study schools. Half of these served communities which ranged quite widely in their socioeconomic status and cultural background, though only 2 of the children were in classrooms with substantial proportions of children from homes where English was not the first language. The other half of the schools had few children from low-income homes, or homes where English was not the first language. Class size and patterns of grouping were much the same as for the other children in the study.

Children's Perspectives

First Year

Playing did not dominate the aspects of school which the new entrant children said they liked. Painting, printing, and singing were the most mentioned. Several also mentioned phonics, playing in the home corner, or playing with Lego and train sets. Dislikes centred on writing "long" stories, or stories that could not be finished in the time allowed. Two children did not like reading or "work". One child did not like phonics, another disliked printing. Their comments about their groups were mainly positive. Two would prefer other groups because "I've read all the books" and "It's a bit too easy".

Most thought they were good at reading and writing. Their reasons for thinking they were good at reading were that they could read books on their own, could read "hard" books - or could read "any book except hard books". Their gauges for writing achievement were knowing how to spell "lots of words", and getting a stamp for their work from their teacher. Two thought they were not good at writing, 2 were unsure of their writing skill and 1 did not think much of his reading.

> Every time I write something I keep on forgetting it's right. I can't spell anything.
>
> I do wee little printing, it doesn't take very long. But I'm not good at writing, because I'm not learning at home.
>
> I don't like reading. I can't read. I can only read little books.

They were less forthcoming about their mathematical progress. One said she was good

at it because it was fun; another thought he was "a bit good at it, I'm doing it nicely, but a bit yukky."

Second Year

In their second year, several of the children mentioned writing as the aspect of school they liked most; several cited reading, mathematics, and making things. Two also mentioned playing as well as a classroom activity.

Two of the children did not like writing (1 specified "long" stories); 2 did not like being told off; 1 did not like "doing pictures"; and 1 did not like sitting on the mat - "it's boring". Only 1 mentioned "hard work".

The children generally liked the groups they were in (for reading and mathematics). Their reasons were the stories they read, and the level of work. What this meant varied: 1 boy spoke of liking his group "because the books get harder and harder and I like reading the harder books" but he would prefer to be in a higher group, with "longer" books. One child who would not mind being in another group to be with a friend wanted to have work that was "not too hard and not too easy". A third child, who did not aspire to another group, liked his because of "its easy books". But where children would prefer to be in another group, the main reason was because the other group had "harder" work, or was "higher".

Three of the children had some doubts about how good they were at reading, writing, and mathematics, without giving reasons except for Vivienne, who gave most credence to peer judgment:

> I'm not sure, because Mum, Dad and the teachers think I'm good, but I don't, because some people think I'm not.

The other 7 children in this group thought they were good at the "3Rs". Their reasons for a positive assessment ranged from feedback (comments or ticks) from teacher or parent, to passing their own landmarks: knowing words they used not to (in reading or spelling), or writing longer stories than they used to. Several children used their group membership as a gauge. Others felt that to be good did not mean perfect:

> Whenever I do maths, it usually equals the right number.

Sophie, whose teacher noted repetitive stories and the need to prompt her to use new words, perhaps saw goodness differently from her teacher:

> I know how to spell every word I write about.

Third Year

While 2 of the children in their third year said that what they liked about school was playing with their friends, they also mentioned aspects of classroom work. One child talked of drawing. Three children said simply "because you learn things". Writing, reading, or mathematics were mentioned by all the girls in this group, and by 2 of the 6 boys. Interestingly, the 2 who mentioned mathematics were both girls. Writing and spelling dominated the aspects of school which the children did not like. Writing could take "too long" and the result was not immediate:

> I don't like writing stories because you don't finish it in 1 day.

Several children did not like writing because they could not think of topics. One boy did not like being told off, and Peter, who was struggling to make further progress in reading, did not like going to the school library "because I don't want to get out serial books".

Most of the children who were not in the highest reading group in their class would prefer to be in that group. They also appreciated having "hard" words, or a variety of reading material in their own group. Only 3 of the children were still in groups for writing, and 4 for mathematics. Peter said of his mathematics group:

> My group's doing the second hardest, but I don't like it, it sucks. It's got too much boring things. I'd rather be in the group with my friends. I'm the only boy in my group, and I hate girls.

All the children thought they were good at reading, though Vivienne qualified her self-assessment:

> I'm sort of good. Because I read a page of a chapter book, and it was quite long.

The main sources for the children's judgment of their reading were feedback from their teachers (in the form of comments, or stars/stickers/tokens), feedback from parents (mainly verbal comments), the type of book they were reading (journals, serials, and chapter books), or their being able to read aloud without making a mistake.

> I never miss a word out. Because I think with my brain.

All the children also thought they were good at writing, though Mickey said he was [not good but] "all right", and Vivienne was a little hesitant:

> I think so, because Mrs Tremain seems to like my stories.

Teacher feedback and spelling words correctly were the main criteria used by the children in assessing their writing prowess:

> 'cause I can write lots of words, except I can't spell *determined*.

Teacher feedback and getting most of the work right were also the main gauges used by the children to judge their mathematics achievement. Three of the children were unsure whether they were good at mathematics. One said he was too slow, 1 said he didn't know because "no-one's told me", and 1 said:

> I'm just normal. Sometimes I make mistakes.

Teachers' Perspectives

First Year

In their first school year, 2 of the children were thought to be above average over all by their teachers, and a further 2 above average in their reading. One was thought to be slightly below average, particularly in reading and writing, and the rest were seen as average in their ability. Two of the children had made more progress than their teachers had originally expected. In Sonia's case, the teacher thought this was due to her knuckling down to work, and the teacher facing down her behavioural challenges. In Mickey's case, the teachers also put effort into changing "off-task" behaviour, and finally changed his

class, with this result:

> I'm really thrilled with his language work now. He doesn't work for long, the quality's poor, but he is working independently. He has difficulty understanding the story, plots - he can't anticipate because he hasn't enough language background. [An older sibling had been through Reading Recovery.] When he came he couldn't recognise his name, hold a pencil, write his name; he didn't know any nursery rhyme songs. I think he's been tremendously lucky to be in a group of able children - it does lift the bottom groups up.

The teacher of the 1 child who made less progress than expected described Vivienne's reading as "wonderful" in her first few months of school - perhaps influenced by the teacher's knowledge of an older sibling who was "always reading"; but found her reluctant to take risks with unknown words, and by the end of the year, a likely candidate for Reading Recovery.

Four of the 10 children were described as having some behavioural traits that had made it difficult for them to settle to school, or which detracted from their fully achieving the ability they were thought to have, although 2 of these made more progress than their teacher originally anticipated. One was quick to cry if he was frustrated in his work, particularly in writing, and partly because he had poor pencil grip. Robert was "bright", with a winning sense of humour, but did not concentrate. Sonia had a pronounced temper, and a strength of character which made her unafraid of challenging the teacher by her behaviour: she was more even tempered by the end of the year. The fourth child, Mickey, had an ability to turn off and tune out, and, again, to have no fear of challenging teacher authority by staying out in the playground long after the bell had rung for classroom work.

Both Sonia's and Mickey's teachers worked quite hard to channel their energy into classroom work. Their efforts with the other 2 children were less successful, and the style with which these children approached their classroom work was still much the same in their third year of school: 1 too breezy, too interested in his peers, and 1 stuck on perfection.

Their teachers were confident that all the children would pass School Certificate bar Mickey, the one child thought to be a little below average and "handicapped from the start" by his home environment. Those who faced potential obstacles to their academic achievement were 3 of the 4 with difficult or challenging behavioural traits (not the boy who cried), and Vivienne, the girl who had not achieved as well as expected:

> Possibly she'll have a problem with lack of confidence, her quietness. [Though] she's not too influenced or distracted by what the other people do - there is a bit of strength of character there in her own quiet way.

Second Year

Their second-year teachers described half the 10 children as good over all or average; 1 girl was "a little above average" and 2 boys were seen as above average; Sonia (first language not English) and 1 boy were seen as slightly below average. The latter's teacher was not sure if he would get School Certificate, and the teachers of 2 whom they saw as good average children had some hesitancy:

> She can be very nervous, and very sensitive, so change, for example in the family, could be devastating.

> Peter lacks motivation, has an inconsistent attitude. He can be silly, off task, easily distracted, and

distracts others. He has to be monitored. He lacks confidence in written language so he's not reaching his full potential.

Five of the children made more progress over the year than their teachers had expected. Two of those were described as good average; 1 as slightly below, and 1 slightly above, average; and 1 above average). The progress of 3 of the children was put down to growing confidence as they mastered basic skills, understood concepts that had eluded them (in mathematics), or could produce longer or more coherent stories. Parental encouragement was seen as a crucial ingredient in the progress of 1 child, and a quick passage through Reading Recovery a turning point for another.

His confidence has grown in the attempt to write a lot more - now he settles down and completes his work very quickly.

As Peter's reading level advances, so his interest seems to have increased - though he still needs encouragement to take books home.

(first term) Sonia's slow in maths, has more difficulty than the rest of the class. Appears to have understood the concepts - in fact she hasn't. She tries hard, but not very successfully.
(third term) Now she understands, she loves maths. She wants to do as much as possible, she asks for more.

Change in behaviour was also marked for the latter child, moving from occasional sulkiness to a steadier state. Although 1 boy (seen as below average) was still reading below his chronological age, a link - perhaps of a circular kind - was also seen between his behaviour changes and greater achievement:

Mickey's gone like a rocket in his reading. Insists he should be in a higher group. Needs to be reminded sometimes that reading must make sense. In writing he's also made giant progress, doesn't change his story mid-stream any more. He's confident on the computer, shows other children what to do. Now he comes into the class at the same time as the other children, when the bell rings.

Unwillingness to take risks was identified for only 2 of the children, though both of these made progress and gradually gained confidence, 1 seeming to gain confidence in her writing that transferred to her reading. The other child would have had Reading Recovery had the school had the resources. Her teacher felt she would have made more progress in both reading and writing if she could have had Reading Recovery, but she too managed to move forward. Her teacher suggested that this was because she picked up the habit of self-correction more in her reading. Fastening on to the concept of self-correction would put mistakes in a new light, as temporary, rather than permanent, and a step in the right direction.

(first term) Vivienne's not yet reading for meaning; she doesn't take risks. She gets stuck on unknown words, and doesn't read on or rerun. In writing, the length has increased; she is making an independent choice of topic, and her concentration is slowly developing. She attempts to write unknown words rather than just sitting.
(third term) Now she's more self-correcting, she's more willing to have a try. More often than not she gets the correct word and that builds her self-esteem. She seems to enjoy the books she reads, though she's still hesitant. In writing, sometimes quite original, though short, stories. Still very slow.

Three important qualities of children's learning progress emerge in looking at the subsequent reading progress of these 2 children. Vivienne was reading several levels behind Mickey at this stage of their learning careers; a year later she was reading 6-12

months ahead of him on reading age. The material from the study indicates 3 reasons.

First, although she was slower to start, she was reading "for meaning" rather than to get through the words, the book, and reach the "longer" book. This suggests a learning-goal rather than performance-goal orientation. Second, there was a difference in family resources, with the interests of Vivienne's parents giving her informal, everyday access to a wider range of topics and knowledge areas than Mickey. This was likely to give her a larger vocabulary to draw on in her language work. Third, while she was regarded as a sensitive child, and hesitant, she was not seen as a restless, easily distracted child - as the boy was. This suggests that some kinds of behaviour are more of an obstacle to secure learning than others. Such behaviour was seen to drag down the academic achievement of 1 of the boys thought to have higher than average ability.

The other main obstacle to the achievement of children in this group was pace: slowness in 2 children; and rushing ahead in 2 others.

Most of the children's mothers had some informal contact with the teachers as well as attending parent-teacher interviews. Two had not, and their children's teachers thought they were not very supportive, or interested, in their child's work at school. Both of the children were also seen as slightly below average in ability. But the degree of informal contact does not necessarily translate into teacher approval of parents: 1 who did have quite a lot of informal contact was thought to "dote" too much on her child, so that his sometimes demanding and reckless behaviour went unchecked.

Third Year

Half the children's ratings from their teachers shifted between their second and third years. Mickey was still seen as having slightly below-average ability. Three of the boys shifted downwards in the teacher ratings: 2 from above average to average; and 1 from above average to slightly above average. Sonia was now seen as a good average. Two children, both with the same teacher, shifted upwards from average to above average.

Robert made less progress over all than expected. His teacher thought this was due to lack of thought, and lack of concentration.

Two of the 4 girls in this group of middle achievers made more progress than their third-year teachers originally expected; and 1 boy made more progress in writing. Two of the 3 who made more progress than expected were described by their teachers as quiet, or undemanding ("easily overlooked if you're not careful"), yet both had made progress after their teacher told either them or their parents at mid-year, or earlier, that they needed to put more effort into their work, indicating the value of drawing parents (if supportive) into the work of making progress.

The turning point for the third child who made more progress than expected seemed to the teacher to have been when the girl asked if she could show a dance learnt at her ballet lessons to the junior school assembly, that is, drawing on successful learning experience which for this child occurred beyond the school. Peer influence, and parent intervention to move her to another writing group, also counted:

> (first term) She has some difficulty in comprehension, both oral and written. She needs to read for meaning, and rerun. Her writing is very neat and clear, but it lacks imagination - it's rather restricted, perhaps because of her protected home environment. She's slow to get ideas down, a bit of a dreamer. Not self-motivated. She's hooked on being neat and correct, as is her appearance.
> (third term) She's reading more for meaning, she's more on task. Occasionally has difficulty following instructions, but she comes for help. Her move to a new table has speeded up her writing output considerably. She's writing a page a day now, the content is more detailed, and more descriptive.

She's showing more animation - she's lost that anxious look. She's blossomed since she gave that dancing demonstration. She's very calm now, unruffled.

Peer influence was identified by the teachers as a factor in the progress of 6 of the 10 children in this group. Being with older children, or children who were producing more advanced work - particularly in writing - seemed to the teachers of 2 of the children to have had positive effects on their own work, on their expectations of themselves and what they could produce. In contrast, the presence of older children sometimes inspired another boy to be "smart" and "show off", yet being able to show younger or less advanced children how to use the class computer seemed to increase his confidence. Two of the boys were seen as susceptible to distraction from their "naughty" peers. One girl's schoolwork and confidence improved to the level her teacher had originally expected after a dominating child left the class, and she made friends with several new arrivals who were "all similar in abilities and motivation - very happy and quietly competitive".

The main problems identified by the teachers were: limited range in written work (4 children at the end of the year), scrappy "setting out" in mathematics (3 children), lack of concentration or ease of distraction (3 of the 6 boys), being in too much of a hurry to finish (2 children), not being able to work without direction (2 children), and not understanding concepts, but not asking (1 child). Two of the 3 children who were upset if they made mistakes at the beginning of the year had become more confident by the year's end; 1 still got tearful.

Three of the children had made progress by finding some satisfaction in the work itself, rather than seeing it as a "task" (in their teacher's term) to be completed before more pleasant things could be done.

(first term) His reading strategies are fine, he just needs more independence. . . . Trent sees writing as a task, still. He's impressed by quantity rather than quality, and can ramble and repeat his thoughts. He is more capable than his work suggests. He needs to think through his ideas before recording them, and he hasn't developed self-correcting skills yet. He also limits himself by preferring to write the correct word rather than what he thinks it may be.
(second term) The progress is in comprehension. Reading is no longer a task to be completed, and once read, he never gave a story another thought. He has been a little confused as to what was 'expected' of him. Independence is next! . . . Trent has enjoyed better results in writing due to the fact that he sees it as less of a task, and more as an extension of his thoughts. Getting him to talk his story through has helped him a lot. Makes the writing process flow better too. He loves sharing the finished product with the class. The processes of spelling and grammar are developing nicely.

The sense of writing as a product also seemed to play a part in the (lesser) progress of another who began the year approaching work as a task.

(first term) Mickey is always in a hurry to complete his reading, and he doesn't want to waste time discussing it, or looking at words. His writing is short but interesting. He finds the physical side a chore. He'd rather be outside.
(third term) His self-correcting abilities have improved; he likes to research the current topic in the library and share with the teacher. He's enjoying writing now, improving the length and structure of his stories - he's more aware of an audience. The problem is getting beyond the realm of his own experience.
Over the year he's become better at completing tasks and handing them in. But he's still not an independent worker. He lacks a lot of confidence, he still seeks help or reinforcement.

These 2 examples give a good illustration of the complex nature of progress, and obstacles to it.

Home Resources and Activities

Parents' Activities

Half the children's parents read the newspaper regularly, and 8 of the parents read books, some mainly fiction, some mainly technical or non-fiction, and magazines. Writing activities included letters, shopping lists, and reports and notes for paid and voluntary work activities.

Library Visits

Besides the school library, half the children went regularly to their local public library.

Reading: First Year

In their new entrant year, most of the children frequently took their reading books home and read them to a parent. All but 2 of the parents also read frequently to their children.

Reading: Second Year

Most of the children continued to read regularly to their parents from the books brought home from school in their second year. Two of the children said they did not read for themselves, but looked at the pictures. Most of the parents read regularly to their children.

Reading: Third Year

In the third year, some of the children now read to older siblings rather than parents. Half the parents read to their children on a regular basis, a slight decline from the previous year. As well as the books they took home from school, the children also read, or looked at, the books they and their siblings had at home, and borrowed books. A few children read comics (1 boy who mentioned them in the first term interview said in the third term that he didn't read them any longer because he had read all they had, and there was no money to buy more). Other sources of reading material were television titles and advertisements, shop signs, street signs and banners, and the newspaper. (Trent said "I only read in newspapers if they've got some rugby.") One mother watched her daughter looking at the newspaper:

> She'll pick up the newspaper and start reading. Last night it was the headlines, something about Kennedy's sex life, and I just sat and thought, 'I wonder what she'll say as she's reading it', and she said nothing, so I don't know whether she realised what it was, whether she took it all in!

Four of the children went regularly to the local public library; 4 went occasionally, or during school holidays; and 2 did not use it. Some of the children using the local public library borrowed audio tapes of books, or videos, as well as books.

Home Teaching: First Year

Home teaching in the new entrant year had an emphasis on domestic skills - cooking and sewing for 2 girls; being tidy and looking after their own belongings for others. Other teaching was mainly by informal extension on topics the child showed interest in, through conversation, or getting resources (such as library books, tapes); and 1 parent emphasised:

> consideration of others, because it's helpful for me in the short term, and him in the long term.

Home Teaching: Second Year

Although several parents mentioned overseeing homework, and helping them, none engaged in any formal teaching activities at home in the children's second year at school. Three mentioned "extending" their children's knowledge, for example about mathematics, when the children showed an interest. One parent put an emphasis on:

> Manners, not to hit girls, not to use bad language that he picks up from school; tidiness.

Home Teaching: Third Year

Home teaching in the third year was in domestic skills, and looking after oneself, and being "independent". It was done informally, as children expressed interest, or as the opportunity arose:

> I teach him new words when they come up, because he's interested, and when he asks. Things like how to peel a carrot, because he wants to eat it, how to make a cushion on the sewing machine, because he wants to. Also household chores - I showed him how to set knives and forks; the others in the family have done the rest.

Trent, who initially approached reading and writing as set tasks done to meet adult demands was 1 of 2 children whose parents deliberately worked on "school subjects":

> I push the reading, because he doesn't like reading. I bribe him - Trent has to read it first, then he can watch TV . . . myself, I have to be in the mood to read.

In talking about the reading he did at home, Trent said "I want to read in my mind, but my Mum doesn't let me. I have to read to her."

The other child's parents went over the 1 and 2 times tables with her in a limited time period. Interestingly, in her interview with the researcher, she remembered these as things she had learnt at school.

Home Activities: First Year

Drawing was the most frequent indoor activity of the children's new entrant year, mentioned by 6 of the 10 children, with a further 2 specifying colouring in. Four of the children each mentioned writing, Lego, card or board games, and playing with toys or cars. Two each liked reading, listening to story tapes, and singing. Others mentioned were puzzles, "counting up to 10 in Maori", watching TV, and looking after the baby. Two children mentioned computer games.

Outdoor activities included bicycles (3 children) and skateboards (2 children). Other activities were playing with balls, swimming, playing with siblings, and "anything outside". Two of the children went to swimming and gymnastic lessons.

Home Activities: Second Year

In the second year, board games and cards were mentioned by 7 of the children as amongst their favourite home indoor activities. Other activities included watching television (6 children), writing - cards, letters, "made-up words" (5 of the 10 children). Lego, reading, playing with toys or animals or cars were mentioned by 4, and 3 liked to make things, draw, or colour in or copy. Three of the 4 girls sewed or cooked, and 1 helped with younger siblings. One boy played with a trainset, and liked puzzles.

Cartoons were the favoured television programmes (4 of the 10 children). Two liked

a quiz show, 2 humour, 1 liked sport, and another nature programmes.

Four of the children played computer games; 3 used a calculator, 3 counted objects, including money (though it is not clear whether they counted the coins as objects or added the denominations of the coins); 6 looked at calendars (it was not clear whether they did this to tell the day or the date); and 1 could tell the time.

Home Activities: Third Year

In their third school year, 6 of the 10 children did some writing at home, ranging from letters and cards to writing stories, sometimes brought home from school. Trent said "I finish writing stories, because I get more help that way". Four children, all but 1 with several older siblings, played card and board games. Four children drew pictures, and another 3 coloured in existing pictures. Five of the children - 4 boys and 1 girl - made things, ranging from a paper recycler to wooden machine guns and boomerangs, or took things apart to see how they worked. Four of the children mentioned television.

Outside play was an important feature for most of the children, whether tag, elastics, climbing, getting under the house, or going eeling in the neighbourhood creek. Four of the children now had bicycles, and 3 of the boys had skateboards. Several of the children mentioned swimming and tennis. Other activities were hopscotch, skipping, playing with balls, hide and seek, and "playing Ninja turtles".

Half the children had some extracurricular activity: 4 went to swimming lessons; 1 boy to cricket, 1 girl to gym and music lessons; and another to tennis and ballet.

Seven of the children now counted money - and 1 whose money was kept in a coinbox lamented "I keep trying to guess how much is there". Four of the children checked the date on calendars. Only 2 had access to calculators, and did not seem to use them often. Three girls and 1 boy mentioned computer games, though none of the children seemed to use computers for word processing or mathematics. Five of the 6 boys played with Lego - the sixth, Trent, derided it as "too babyish". Trent played 4 sports; and all but 1 of the boys played either soccer (4) or rugby (2). None of the girls played team sports, and only 1 went to ballet or gym lessons. One boy went to Keas; one other went off and on, but was impatient to be with the older boys he played with after school, on "outdoor" activities. One girl went to Brownies.

Parents' Perceptions of Their Children's Strengths and Weaknesses

First Year

In the new entrant year, the main strengths parents identified their children as having were being active, being confident, and being good at making or imagining things. Two noted their children's academic progress. Only 3 of the parents identified weaknesses in their children: not coping well in some situations, and not asking for help then, because of a lack of confidence; being moody and a bit bossy; and having, at times, too strong a will.

Second Year

In the children's second school year, 4 of the 10 parents saw the likability or easy nature of their child as a strength: "she's got a nice little personality, lots of friends"; "he's a jolly comedian, easy to get on with, outgoing". Three noted their child's ability at sport or physical activity, and 2 of these also mentioned 1 of the "3Rs"; 2 each mentioned a creative, or helpful, child. One child was seen as musical. The main drawback mentioned

was being reserved. Two parents mentioned school subjects, not the "3Rs", and 1 thought her child was too happy-go-lucky for the good of his self-motivation.

Third Year

The likability or sociability of their child was positively mentioned by 3 parents in the third year; making things by another 3, sports for 2 of the boys, being tidy and looking after things for 2 of the girls. Four of the parents (of 2 boys, and 2 girls) mentioned mathematics, and of 1 girl, reading. Behaviour or character traits were the main drawbacks. Reading was seen as a weakness for 3 of the 6 boys, and writing for 2 children.

Parents' Perspectives on Their Children's School Progress

First Year

One parent was dissatisfied with her child's achievement in her first school year, and 2 others had question marks which they were inclined to answer with the child's nature, or the passage of time.

> I'm not at all pleased with her reading. She is very slow compared to my other children. At the end of her first year at school, she should be reading. She knew her alphabet before going to school . . . I don't think there's enough spelling, enough repetition nowadays.

> He does what he's told now, and he concentrates more. He can recognise the alphabet, and he likes a story now. He doesn't seem to write a lot, but that's more his own nature.

> She's doing more advanced reading, though she hasn't taken off as quickly as expected. It's early days yet: you can't judge.

The rest were pleased with the progress they had seen. Settling into school was as valued as progress in reading and writing.

> He's settled in, started on the basic learning skills.

> She's done really well with her reading, from the books she brings home. She's learnt to share things, and she likes school.

> He's reading more words, enjoys books more. He seems more confident, happy.

Second Year

Reading, neatness of writing, and being happy at or interested in school were the main criteria that parents used in commenting on their children's school progress in the second year of school.

> His writing is even now, not a scrawl, and he's more fluent in reading.

> She's doing more complex reading. She should be able to read a book by herself with as little help as possible, and she can do it.

> Her reading is a bit better, she will pick bits out of the newspaper now.

> He should be reading independently, and he's doing that; mix with a wide range of children, tolerate differences, and he's doing that. He's got a general desire to learn, and he takes pleasure in school.

All had seen progress, though 1 parent who had been unhappy in the first year

remained dissatisfied:

> She should be on to harder books. She brings home the same book too often, though otherwise the level of work is getting more difficult.

Comparison or estimation of children's progress by memories of what other children in the family had been doing at the same age was common with those who had older children. Only one mentioned the group her child was in as a gauge; and one who thought his child was "a bit slow to finish things" was reassured by the teacher saying she had other children "like that".

Third Year

All but 2 of the children were seen by their parents to have made further progress in their third year of school. Half of these children had made steady progress, and half had overcome obstacles or caught up with where parents and/or teachers thought they should be, gauged by such things as increased reading fluency, writing longer or more interesting stories, spelling more words correctly, knowledge of addition and the times table (usually up to 5 or 6 times), showing confidence, growing independence (or ability to work unaided), and ability to get on or work with others.

> Subtle changes - she's much more interested in reading, loves it now - perhaps being with older children has had some influence. She shows a lot more independence in reading, reads books in bed, silent reading, and she's learning to do research, which she enjoys. It makes her feel grown up - she knows this is what her older sister does. She's coping well with spelling, writing a lot more, willing to make attempts. She used to be more worried about getting things wrong. My main concern is that she's working at an appropriate level for her age, and being extended.

Three of the children who had overcome obstacles had done so through the concerted attention or intervention of teachers and parents:

> I've talked to the teacher about Trent's lack of interest in reading. She gave me an idea of what to do.

> There's been a great change - Sandy's more confident, now that she's removed from the bad influence of that girl; she's reading very well now - 4 years above her chronological age, and she's more enthusiastic about school. The teacher has really helped and brought things right - more variety of activities, more creative things. Her teacher last year didn't really explain that she was having problems in reading - I had no idea until Reading Recovery was brought up, and she also let things go in terms of the friendship that were bad.

> Sarah's much happier now, in a faster group. Her work was slow, really neat, but a wee bit slow. We wondered whether perhaps she was spending too much time making it nice and neat, not getting on and writing what she wanted to. We said at the oral interview that perhaps it would be a good idea if she shifted to a group of children that work a bit faster, because she does follow other children. She's writing much more now, her spelling's improving, though she still makes a lot of mistakes.

The parents of 1 child thought he had not made the progress they expected during the year - as did his teacher. Both parents and teacher put it down to his character, or lack of maturity.

> He likes school, but he's a little bit more complacent. Look at his report, he's slipped down a bit. He's a bit of a joker. I don't know why, he's got an excellent teacher. Last year's teacher was very vibrant and arty, he could get away with more. Perhaps it's the reality of having to actually sit down and knuckle down to his work - a bit of a shock to the system. The level of neatness in his printing has

gone down. What he's getting is fine, it's just him - whether it's maturity, or will come with maturity with him, I don't know. The teacher raised a concern about his reading, that if he was tired, I was to read with him, take a page each, to make it more fun, more informal, not so stringent. He did improve from that.

One child whose parent had some doubts about her achievements was thought by her teacher to have made more progress than expected during the year. Although her mother thought she was reading fluently, coping well with mathematics, had more legible printing, and used her imagination more -

Her stories are [still] not very imaginative - I don't know how that could be improved upon. She's doing OK in maths and storywriting, though her teacher said that sometimes she's quite slow. The teacher also said she was a bit concerned that Sonia doesn't say anything in class discussions. She suggested that she speak English at home. I often do speak English with her at home, and she's a real chatterbox - I don't know why she won't talk the same at school.

Here was one teacher-initiated intervention which fell flat. Perhaps not surprisingly: the research literature on the difficulties of ESL children who are in a minority in their classrooms and schools would suggest that changes to the classroom environment and teaching approach would be more successful.

Parents' Perceptions of What Helps Children's Success in Their First 3 Years of School

We asked parents what they thought helped children to succeed in their first 3 years of school when their children were near the end of that period. Six of the 10 emphasised the children's teacher: her attitude to the children, her ability to provide interesting work and helpful, timely feedback (to parents as well as children). Three of these parents and 1 other also mentioned the school environment - whether it was safe, cheerful, encouraging.

They need a sympathetic environment at school, a good attitude from the teacher, a programme tailored to children's needs, a willingness to cater for children's present individual needs, and provide extra help, if necessary.

They need a good environment, which they've got down there, nice school teachers, and she's really nice. If they like what they're doing, they're going to do well. Mickey likes his friends - that's important too. The teachers are really, really good - it's a really tough job. I'd hate to be a teacher - one-to-one with kids is very different from some of the big classes they've got.

Really effective support from the teachers, plenty of specific honest feedback so they get to see the value or use of what they are doing.

Eight of the parents also felt that confidence was important, and that home relationships, interest, and support counted. Half of these felt that the home was the most important factor in a child's initial school success.

If they're happy, confident, they'll succeed. I don't think teachers can really make children happy all day, day after day, if they're unhappy at home. No matter what you do at school, it's not really going to make a child happy, is it? It's the home environment.

9 HIGH ACHIEVERS

Family Characteristics

Seven of the 8 children in this group lived in 2-parent nuclear families; the parents of 1 child separated during the course of this study. Five had 2 siblings, 2 had 1 sibling, and 1 was an only child. Three were the eldest in their family, 3 came in the middle, and 1 was youngest. All but 1, who had 1 European parent, were European/Pakeha; and all had English as their home language.

Three of the children had 1 parent full time at home; 3 had 1 parent working or studying part time, and 2 were in families where both parents worked full time. All the working parents had professional or semiprofessional work.

All had had early childhood education (2 at kindergarten; 2 at playcentre; 1 at playcentre, then kindergarten; 2 at creche/playgroup; and 1 at kohanga reo), though 1 had had only a short period at playcentre before going to school.

School Resources

The 8 children came from 6 of the 10 study schools: 3 of the children came from 1 school; each of the others from a different state school. Half of the 6 schools served mainly middle-class, Pakeha/European families. Class sizes were much the same as the other schools. All were grouped by achievement level in reading and mathematics. Some had different teachers for different curriculum areas. Five of the children were in classes that used open-plan classrooms, and one was in a vertically grouped class.

Children's Perspectives

First Year

Only 2 of the 7 children in this set who were interviewed in their first year said that playing was what they liked best about school; and one of these mentioned reading and mathematics as well. The main reasons for liking mathematics were the diversity of activities and the ability to exercise choice. Two reasons were given for liking reading: "There might be interesting pages" and "I just like the words". Two of the children did not like writing, and 1 disliked children who pushed.

Most of the children liked the groups they worked in. Their reasons for liking the reading groups were threefold: the material in the group, "we get the best books"; the work of the group "because we read"; and the presence of other children the child was comfortable with - friends, or "because there are new people, and I'm one of the new people". Friendship was the main reason given for liking mathematics groups. One girl did not like her writing group because it had few of her friends, and another preferred a different reading group "because they've got harder books".

The 2 children in this high-achieving group who were asked whether they were good at the "3Rs" felt they were: 1 did not know why, and the other instanced feedback from teachers and parents, and for mathematics, "because I do things the right way".

Second Year

In their second school year 4 of the 8 children mentioned curriculum areas as the area they most liked about school (2 reading, 1 mathematics, 1 writing), and another, simply "learning". Two also mentioned a choice of activities or making things. One said "drawing pictures, eating lunch", and 1 boy said he preferred playtime, as he didn't really like school. The other 2 boys, unlike the girls, also expressed some dislike: 1 didn't like "hard work", and the other did not enjoy mathematics.

Most of the children liked the reading and mathematics groups they were in: half because it was the highest group in the class; the other half because the work was "hard", varied, or, in Simon's case, because it had "nice" people in it. Three preferred other groups for 1 curriculum area: 1 wanted to be in the highest group; 1 wanted "harder" work; and 1 preferred his former mathematics teacher.

Most of the children also thought they were good at the "3Rs", although 3 children qualified their writing achievement, and 1 of these also hesitated over his reading, without giving any reasons. One of the doubters, Dan, used a distinction between imaginary and real to question his performance:

> I'm not really good at writing, I can't think of things to write about, so I make things up.

Reasons given by the children for their judgment of themselves as good readers focused mainly on getting words right:

> I'm good at reading because I make few mistakes when I read at night.

Teacher feedback was mentioned directly by 1 girl, and indirectly by another, Rose:

> because I've tried to read my books and found out how to spell things.

Their reasons for thinking they were good at mathematics varied, with no common thread other than, perhaps, a reflection of what they had been doing most recently: 1 boy was good because he could count to 100; another was good

> because I know how to put things together, because it's mainly puzzles.

One girl was good because "the teacher said the test was too easy": and Rose, because

> I try to do different activities, like the ones I haven't worked with.

Third Year

In their third school year, 3 of the 8 children liked mathematics or reading best; 3 mentioned art; 2 music, and 1, science; 2 of the girls also liked playing, and seeing their friends. It is interesting that an emphasis on play was found in this group - but in their third year, rather than earlier, as for the other 2 groups of children. Was it that for these children, who were reading and writing at home, and using some of the mathematics they had learnt in their home lives, play and friends were now the characteristics which marked out school as a different place?

Two of the boys disliked handwriting. Oliver said:

> Sometimes you have to do the same sentence twice and other people are doing other things.

Simon disliked language because "sometimes it's hard". Two of the children did not like outdoor activities, perhaps for the reason 1 mentioned, that there were more things to do inside. One girl disliked the bullies in her class, and mathematics games "because I've played them all".

Most of the children liked their work groups because they had friends or "nice people" (other girls for 2 of the girls) in them, the books were "good" or "interesting", or because it was the highest group. Emma preferred her former mathematics group, because the work was easier than her present group; and 2 others liked the easiness of their work. One boy would like to be in a higher group. Simon thought of his present and past groups in terms of his teacher, liking the present group because the teacher "didn't shout as much as Mrs Jameson".

Three of the girls, Emma, Melissa, and Laurel, did not think they were good at writing, and Simon was unsure. He was also unsure about his reading, because, like his writing "no one's told me". (Given Simon's liking for precision, this may mean that positive feedback had not been couched in the phrase we used in our interview, "good"). But, like Emma, who now doubted her performance in reading and mathematics, he seemed less confident than others in this group.

Teacher feedback was the most frequent gauge used by the children to assess their performance. Two of the girls used their place in the class, and 1 girl had seen her reading level on her file.

Teachers' Perspectives

First Year

Six of the 7 children for whom teacher data are available for their first year were rated by their teachers as "very able/intelligent/bright"; Oliver was seen as being very able in mathematics, less so in language; and 1 was seen as "good, average ability".

> Simon won't ever fall behind on anything, he'll work at the level for his age. If he can keep up the good work attitude, he should be reasonably good.

Cautions were expressed about 2 of the girls: Emma was seen as unwilling to take risks, and Jessica "should slow down and listen to others more".

Two boys made further progress than their teacher initially expected: 1 child, who had had speech therapist attention for a slow start to language, improved all round; and Simon, in writing:

> I thought he had got to the stage where there are a few things still to learn, and the next day it suddenly dropped into place, beautifully written and spaced. I get desperate with some children, I wonder if we're teaching them anything - and one day it all falls into place.

One girl did less well in writing:

> I feel Jenny's got a really good, imaginative mind, but the actual writing of the story is too much of an effort. She wants to get it done quickly.

Second Year

In their second school year, 5 of the 8 children were now seen as very good, very able, or very capable, or above average. Simon continued to be seen as average; Tracey, who had been seen as very able by her first-year teacher, seemed "just average to above" by her second-year teacher; and Laurel, for whom we had no first-year teacher data, and who went through Reading Recovery at the beginning of the year, was seen as "good". She had not made the progress the teacher expected in reading, though she had become more fluent, with "a more positive approach - more willing to take risks, and she can cope with having to make a second attempt". Dan, who wondered about his writing prowess if he was happiest writing imaginary stories, had also not done as well as the teacher expected.

> (first term) His excellent oral skills are not used in written language. He daydreams, is slow to form ideas.
> (third term) Very mature language, good use of punctuation, but he needs teacher encouragement to sustain it: 'how about telling me . . .' He's not extending himself like others in the class, he's not getting more sophisticated.

Rose, who used her willingness to explore and try out new learning areas as a gauge of her performance, had done better than expected, particularly in reading.

All of the children were described by their teachers as hard working, conscientious, keen, or "like to be kept busy". However, several were open to distraction, and some put an emphasis on first-time accuracy that slowed the amount of work they could do. Some liked to have very clear instructions; others had to come back for clarification, after they had launched quickly into the new activity. Some liked to have work to take home. The emphasis in teachers' specific comments on their work was a need for more editing or self-correction, or an expansion of genres (such as plays, poems, imaginary stories, reports of activities). There was less emphasis than in the other 2 groups of children on basic writing or reading strategies.

All the children were thought capable of passing School Certificate. Teachers of 3 of the children identified potential obstacles to their future academic achievement: Tracey's interest in boys; Dan's lack of personal motivation, and living turn and turn around with his separated parents; Oliver's lack of confidence, and a certain passivity.

All the children's parents were seen as supportive; most had informal links with the teachers, through picking up or dropping off children; and half were actively involved in school trips, helped the school through PTA work or, for 1 parent, as a school trustee. Oliver's teacher felt he sometimes "lacked security, sometimes comes in odd clothes". Dan's parents separated during the year, and the teacher felt their admittedly different approaches to him, and his loyalty to each, was manifesting itself in some inattentiveness and lack of zest.

Third Year

In their third year, all of the girls and 1 boy were seen as being very able. One boy remained as average, with his teacher saying:

> He could do better if he could speed up his handwriting, and loosen up on the need for perfection.

However, he made better progress than she expected over the year, becoming more confident in his mathematics and more willing to discuss written work. He had more friends, she could hear him clearly when she took the roll, and he started to laugh and

show a sense of humour.

Oliver was seen as having moderate ability. His teacher described him as keen and hardworking, and somewhat competitive over "basic facts". Over the year he widened his range of reading material, produced more material in writing, and developed a "very individual style". She found him overly sensitive, though, mentioning an episode where he came to school distressed and unable to be comforted. She had had "minimal" contact with his parents, and felt -

> they obviously have other priorities. I think his mother's expectations are lower than mine - Oliver has achieved a lot through his own efforts.

One other child had made more progress than expected, a child who had pushed (through her parents) to join classmates who were going into a standards classroom.

Once again, Dan made less progress than expected. His third-year teacher did not find an indirect cause in his parents' separation, but noted his unwillingness to concentrate on things that did not interest him. Noting his boredom in mathematics in the first term, she worked to provide him with more extension than others in the class, and noted an improvement. She tried making contracts with him to improve his writing, with less success:

> He prefers to draw or construct - visual forms of expression rather than verbal, writing . . . his over all attitude to school remains fairly positive, but in some areas his enthusiasm has declined somewhat. His application has certainly declined markedly, and he is becoming more difficult to 'manage'. One-to-one is fine, but he is very distracted during group instruction time. It could partly be boredom, but I suspect there is a certain degree of arrogance involved, and simple lack of consideration for others. He obviously gets enormous one-to-one input at home, and finds it hard to wait his turn in group learning situations.

Several of the children were seen as held back somewhat by their emphasis on accuracy; others, conversely, by their desire to do the work quickly and be finished first.

Teachers of 2 children felt their parental support could be improved by paying less, rather than more, attention to academic achievement. Rose (who had made her own way into the higher class) was seen as needing to be more independent (perhaps in contrast to her older classmates); Melissa's parents were seen to compare her unfavourably with her elder sibling. Teacher, parent, and child were all uncomfortable over a fundraising spellathon where the children were given 1 of 2 lists of 50 words to learn over a week. Melissa proved hard to place in the groups - the first was too easy, and the second proved more advanced. She was used to doing much better than she could do on this exercise - which seemed to her a test of both her spelling ability, and her ability to do something good for the school.

Home Resources and Activities

Reading: First Year

All the 6 children in this group whose parents were interviewed in their children's first school year read to their parents, and were read to by their parents. Two of the boys were said to like information books; 1 girl was picking out words from street signs and the newspaper. All but 1 of the parents read a range of material themselves: fiction, non-fiction, magazines, and the newspaper. All the parents thought their children saw them engaged in writing: 4 of the children's parents wrote reports, minutes, essays, or diaries

as well as lists, letters, and cards. Perhaps reflecting their parents' own level of interest in reading, 5 of the 6 children in this group whose parents were interviewed went to the library regularly, often once a week.

Reading: Second Year

In their second year, 6 of the 8 children used a public library regularly, some going on their own. Half the parents said they were reading less to the children than before, though some were sharing the reading of "chapter" books. The children were reading a wider range, nonfiction as well as fiction, and "chapter" books, and some were reading comics, magazines, cereal packets, and sections of the newspaper.

Reading: Third Year

All but 2 of the 8 children went regularly to their local public library in their third school year; 1 borrowed books from friends instead. All the children read regularly to, and were read to by, their parents.

Home Teaching

Home teaching over the first 3 years was mostly informal, and centred on the children looking after themselves. Two of the children used educational software, and 1 girl had been taught how to use a calculator. One parent had tried to teach her child:

> We've tried to be very careful about not pushing things on him. Before he went to school I did want him to write all the letters because my daughter knew all the letters and how to write when she went to school. But Simon was just not interested, so I gave up. We've taught him how to ride a bike, cut gib board - those sorts of things.

Five of the parents saw their teaching role as either building on the child's interests, or providing them with "broader" experience. Rose indicated something of what she had picked up from parental discussion:

> And Mum talks about what suns and stars are, and I only just guessed that our sun is a star to other people on other planets.

Half the parents had shared craft or carpentry skills with their children. The emphasis with Jessica was on manners, and "looking after others". Two parents deliberately focused on "school" work, 1 testing her daughter on sets and subsets, and the other commenting -

> I did teach Laurel the times tables because I felt she was ready for it, she wasn't extended in maths at school, and she had started recognising patterns.

Home Activities: First Year

In their first year, 5 of the 6 children in this group for whom we have data were writing regularly at home - cards, captions on drawings, isolated words, and some, stories. Jenny, who could be too impatient at school, had written "a couple of quite long stories". All the children drew; 2 coloured in (1 "when he gets a new packet of felt tips, till the novelty wears off"). Other indoor activities were board and card games, crafts, playing with cars, playing "offices". Only 1 child used Lego. Two of the children played computer games, and both also used educational software occasionally.

Most of the children swam. Three of the children rode bikes outside; 1 "fought with his

brother"; 3 of the girls were attending ballet or music lessons. One child continued weekly speech therapy sessions which began before he started school.

Home Activities: Second Year

In their second school year, the main indoor activities enjoyed by the children at home were drawing, making things, and playing games (such as Monopoly). Two of the girls wrote stories, and 2 liked to make up stories for their dolls; other activities enjoyed by 1 or 2 children were puzzles, music, colouring in, and playing "offices", "police", or "doctors". Favourite TV programmes were fairly evenly divided between action, cartoons, and humour, with 1 liking quiz shows, and 1, nothing on TV.

Six of the children played with Lego, some constructing, and 1 using it as "decoration". Three of the children were using calendars to tell the date, another to "do sums", and 3 were counting money. One child used a calculator. The 2 children who played computer games and used some educational software in the first year continued to do so; the other 6 children did not have computers at home.

All but 1 of the children were engaged in extracurricular activities. Four went to ballet, music, or art lessons; 1 went to Maori club; 4 went swimming or had swimming lessons; 3 of the girls went to gymnastic classes gym. One girl took music lessons. One of the boys went to tennis and multisports. Only 1 boy had tried soccer (and none rugby), and he had not liked it.

Those with bikes continued to enjoy them; other outdoor activities mentioned by parents were the trampoline, gardening, fishing and ski-ing.

Home Activities: Third Year

In their third school year most played board and card games at home, and most enjoyed making things. Half wrote lists, cards, and letters. Simon gave up playing offices: "I threw out all that stuff". He liked to make books, lists, write letters and poems, and play schools with an elder sibling.

The 3 children who had started music, ballet, or art classes continued to go to them. One girl attended Girls Brigade and tried a music class, but grew tired of it. One of the boys played in a soccer team; and 1 girl did marching and tapdancing. Three of the children played computer games, though intermittently, and were less enthusiastic about games they had mastered. Three used a calculator. Lego was used by most to construct buildings, machines, or backdrops for imaginary play with dolls, creatures, and cars.

Parents' Perceptions of Their Children's Strengths and Weaknesses

First Year

Five of the new entrant parents commented on their child's character, without mentioning specific skills, or physical prowess. Two of the 3 girls were seen as strong, or determined:

> Jenny's very strong, definite, a very finely developed sense of her rights, precocious.

The other was thought slightly shy. Two of the children were described as "a bit perfectionist", and 2 as amiable, "sweet". Both boys were described as somewhat shy.

> Simon's quite a reserved child, shy, probably lacks confidence, but he's very observant, quite intelligent - not a leader.

Second Year

In their second school year, 3 of the 8 parents were pleased that their children were sociable, or mixed well. But the main set of strengths identified were in language, application, visual skills, and creativity. Two of the girls had "strong wills", which was seen as a strength by their parents. Seven identified a range of weaknesses - 2 of the 3 boys were seen as shy, 1 of the girls was not a good mixer, and 1 might be "easily led". One boy and 1 girl were seen as occasionally "overbearing"; 1 girl's work was messy; and 1 girl was "a useless ball thrower!"

Third Year

Main strengths identified by parents in the children's third year were application or enthusiasm, independence, and imagination. Three parents saw some areas of weakness: the 2 shy boys were still seen as lacking some confidence, or being oversensitive, as was 1 of the girls, if things did not go right for her.

Parents' Perspectives on Their Children's School Progress

First Year

As with parents of new entrant children in the other 2 groups of achievers, progress was gauged primarily by reading books, but also by "keeping up" with the children's peers, or the "normal" level for the age, though parents did not have any clear ideas as to what these might be. None of the parents expressed any reservations about their children's progress by this stage.

Second Year

All parents noted some progress in their children's work during their second school year, seeing "a higher level" of the same kind of work as the previous year, or gains in understanding; 2 noted gains in confidence. Three also commented that their children were sometimes a bit bored.

> Simon's work has matured, his writing's improved, he's more interested in writing and reading. I'm not sure about his maths. He's more confident, but sometimes he finds work boring, which he never did last year. Perhaps things are a bit easy.

> I wanted her to be reading books for pleasure and tackling new books, to start to use numbers as abstract concepts, to continue to develop her writing skills - better handwriting, longer, complex writing - she can do all those things now.

> She has a problem with reading, but it wasn't picked up till the 6-year-old screening. I think it's because she's not pushy enough, and with 5 to 6 groups, 2 individuals reading to the teachers, others reading to themselves, playing letter games or reading to friends, it's easy for children to fall through the cracks. A lot of the books she brings home are useful only for the consolidation of reading already done. I wonder if her teachers are monitoring her reading as closely as they might. More changes in school reading matter are needed.

> Melissa's making good progress in most of the skills . . . I had no goals for her. I think I made that mistake with my first child, so now I'm a bit more laid back. You tend with a first child to think that by this age they should be able to do this, or that. It is important to have a really broad background, but as far as specifics go - I've got no goal like being able to do times tables. I think if you want something specific, you put too much pressure on the child; it's more important to encourage them as much as you can.

Third Year

Independence and social fluency joined the "3Rs" as gauges of the children's school progress in their third year. Reading was talked of in terms of enjoyment, such as picking up a book to read at home unprompted, or in terms of moving from pictures to mostly or purely text. Mathematics was seen by some in terms of being able to handle money, which also indicates independence. Other examples were fractions, which enabled the division of food. While all the parents had seen progress, 2 would have liked to have seen more in spelling.

Parents' Perceptions of What Helps Children's Success in Their First 3 Years of School

Enjoyment, parent interest, and the teacher's encouragement and enthusiasm were the main threads in the parents' picture of the factors which contributed to a child's initial school success. Friends were also seen as important by a few, as was keeping the same teacher.

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10 DISCUSSION

These composite portraits of the 3 different groups of children should make more vivid the points made earlier about the importance of "match" in children's learning progress: match between home and school; and match between children's present ability and the curriculum materials, class organisation, and the human resources of their classrooms. In the interactionist, learning-goal-based understanding of progress, or development, this match is not a static matter of putting round peg into round hole, but of finding a dynamic meeting which sparks changes, Vygotsky's "zone of proximal development" (Tudge 1992).

It was clear from our material from teachers that they shared this perspective, and that they aimed to embody it in everyday classroom organisation and practices. Yet the gap between the high and low achievers by their third school year suggests that further or different efforts might need to be made, to reach the children for whom the match between home and school does not come easily.

The parents of the low-achieving children in our study were not very different from the parents of the children in the 2 other groups in their desire for their children to learn, to know, to become competent adults. They were becoming uneasy by the child's third year: they could see progress, but it lacked something.

The teachers of these children generally thought their parents meant well, but could not support their children's learning in the same way as other parents. Sometimes this was a matter of material resources; sometimes (as with some parents of children making faster progress) it was a perception that if parents attempted to teach children, they would do it in ways which would thwart the child's school learning, or their enthusiasm and confidence, and which would be based on performance goals rather than learning goals. So while parents often left it to teachers to tell them if their child was having difficulties, teachers - often from a desire to protect a child - would put the onus on themselves to find ways to bring the children over the obstacles they were encountering. Or they would limit their expectations of the child. If there is regular informal contact with parents, and parents are seen as receptive by teachers, then such ordinary "humps" in learning paths can be discussed, and worked on co-operatively - as can possibilities of extension when a child reveals an interest in a topic, or way of working. But if the contact is irregular, then it is much harder to talk of a child's progress, and in talking between teacher and parent, alight upon the (often) small things which cumulatively can make a difference.

Perhaps a difficulty is that we have conceived of teaching solely as the work of an adult with children, "hands-on" in the classroom. Working with adults thus appears to be an addition, an extra. Yet there is value in drawing on the resources of home, drawing in the child's parents or other close family, showing them more of what goes on in the contemporary curriculum, and why, discussing ideas and materials which could be brought in from the world of home to build a richer platform for a child than either home or school could provide separately. We have certainly not allowed for such joint work in our school structure or in teacher workloads. Some teachers and parents are putting much effort into forming such bridges between these worlds: their discoveries of effective paths need to reach a national audience.

The match between school and home is not an individual, or personal matter, as evidenced in the different social backgrounds of the 3 groups of children, and the fact that

most of the low-achieving children came from 3 of the 10 study schools. It is likely to be the case that such schools, which were serving families whose worlds were most distant from that of school, need a greater level of resourcing than schools where the gap between the 2 worlds is small.

This conclusion is far from new, but perhaps it needs restating at a time when there are moves further to devolve financial responsibilities to schools. These moves are unfortunately likely only further to entrench the already existing (and growing) resource gaps between schools located in areas with different socioeconomic and ethnic profiles. If our focus is on improving children's learning achievement, with all the benefits that has for society in terms of appropriate, solid, skill and knowledge bases for economic and cultural development, and fewer costs to both public and private purse, then we might well ask whether it was more profitable for parents and teachers to be fundraising or mending furniture and drains, or to be exchanging useful information and ideas about children and their learning.

For children's progress in learning is not predetermined or unamendable to intervention - whether good or bad. If looked at in a linear perspective, then it must sometimes appear erratic and unreliable, no matter what the "level" of achievement or rate of progress. Yet if one were to unpack some of the "big bangs" through which some children in this study "suddenly" became commanders of the page or concept, one would find other dimensions of their experience had been at work. Just as progress along one dimension often has spin-off benefits for another, so obstacles found on one can spill over to another. If we approach children's achievement on the basis of a model which takes account of the spiral and multidimensional nature of its dynamism, we are much better placed to support it.

SECTION A - REFERENCES

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SECTION B - ASSESSMENT AND REPORTING PRACTICES

1 INTRODUCTION

Surprisingly little research has been done into actual assessment and reporting practices in the first 3 years of school in New Zealand. Some useful material can, however, be found in the following:

- The Ministry of Education's study of Beginning School Mathematics (BSM), (Bennie *et al.*, 1990);
- Research into judgments by new entrant teachers about children's mathematical abilities (Young-Loveridge, 1987, pp. 28-34);
- NZCER's 3 annual national surveys of the impact of the shift to school-based management (Wylie, 1990, 1992, and Appendix 5 to this report which contains previously unpublished data from 1989 and 1991); and
- A recent survey, commissioned by the Ministry of Education, of material collected on new entrant children (Thackeray *et al.*, 1992).

The sketch of available assessment methods and of the only mandatory recording system for state schools (formerly the Register of Progress and Achievement, now the Primary Progress Record) in *Assessment for Better Learning* (1989, pp. 33-35) provides a good example of the general state of knowledge of the area. Currently we know more about the range of methods in use than of their frequency of use and the purposes to which they are put.

It may be that those researchers interested in assessment have been more concerned with the upper end of schooling and standardised or normed tests such as the *Progressive Achievement Tests*, which only enter into the assessment repertory in the third year of school. It may be, as St George, Chapman and Lambourne (1991) found with their study of Form 1 assessment records, that it is more difficult than it initially appears to derive a comparable picture of schools' practice from indirect sources such as school records. It may be that researcher and practitioner interest in mapping what assessment actually happens in schools has deepened as policy makers have evinced interest in evidence of achievement, and sought greater accountability of schools for their use of public funds (Brown, 1991).

This part of our study was designed to provide an understanding of the different facets of assessment in the junior school, and the factors which affect it. It was not designed to provide a nationally representative picture, but it should provide a starting point enabling comparison between different parts of the country. For example, only 1 of the schools in this study used (part of) the Record of Oral Language, which some observers expected to be in widespread use (e.g., Young-Loveridge 1991, p. 15). Material from the 1989 and 1991 NZCER national surveys reported in Appendix 5 shows in fact that the range of assessment procedures found in these 10 Wellington schools fits with the national picture.

As well as being an educational practice, assessment is a social act, and like all social

acts, only makes sense when it is put into context. We have therefore aimed in this section to relate assessment and reporting practices to the curriculum aims and philosophy of the teachers involved, their views on assessment, the horizon of existing and mooted national curricula and the Achievement Initiative, research analysis both here and overseas of different assessment and reporting practices, and, not least, but perhaps most intangible, the impact the practices have made on the children in the study and on their parents.

What is Assessment?

Assessment is essentially a purposeful judgment based on evidence. As well as the more formal assessments reported in this study, junior school teachers make many assessments in the course of their daily work with children which usually go unrecorded. Some would be noticeable to an adult observer (or the video camera which was used in the related study of these classrooms by McDonald *et al.*, 1991, 1992a, 1992b), such as direct comments to children on their work or behaviour. Some may not, such as the hug, smile, question, or extra attention which are the outcome of teacher assessment of say, a child's level of energy, how well he or she is coping with illness or family problems, or persevering with something worthwhile which he or she finds hard. The evidence on which these informal assessments are based is primarily the teacher's own experience of the individual children, with a secondary layer of experiences of other children, and, perhaps, other adults' assessments of the individual children involved. The form of the judgment is a comparison of past and present; the purpose, to decide what action is needed from the teacher to encourage or support the child.

Purposes of Assessment

Most of the recorded assessment carried out within the junior classes in this study shared this purpose of clarifying the needs of an individual learner so that the teacher could respond in a way which would take the child further. That response could include altered teacher behaviour, or putting other or new resources before the child, such as the next level of reading books. Junior school assessment practice is often summarised as diagnostic in contrast to the domination of summative, or "final sentence", end-of-year assessment in the upper secondary school. While this is true for the general purpose of much junior school assessment, the *form* it takes can be summative, such as BSM checkpoints in mathematics, or tests at the end of sections in mathematics workbooks.

Assessment, particularly in this summative form, was also used to allocate children to groups, mainly reading and mathematics, and to classes in the schools in this study. Much of the grouping was "ability", that is, current working/achievement level. However, movement between groups was not frequent - perhaps no more than once or twice a year for each curriculum area for most of the children in our study. It was more likely to occur in the first year of school, when groups are generally more fluid because of the arrival of new 5-year-olds in the class; and it was more likely to occur near the beginning of the year as new teachers assessed the children. Group membership can have some bearing on the resources available to children, such as teaching time or the range of learning experiences (e.g., Clay 1979, p. 179; Young-Loveridge 1987, p. 58).

The third main purpose of assessment in the junior school classes in this study was to provide evidence of progress. Sometimes this evidence was for the teacher's reassurance of their own unrecorded day-to-day assessment. More often it provided the focus for the distillation of a child's half-yearly and annual academic and social progress into written

reports and oral comments to parents/caregivers, and to other or future teachers of the child.

It is also illuminating to look at one purpose of assessment which was *not* used in the classrooms we studied. This is the use of standardised tests to gauge the "readiness" of a child to embark on school life. While a few of the schools in the study used check lists of skills and behaviours at entry, the check lists were tailor-made, and did not decide whether a child was "ready" to be admitted to school or not. The unwanted negative effects of inappropriate screening tests on children's learning and maturity have now been thoroughly documented in the United States (*see*, for example, Eilwein *et al.* 1991, and Kamii (Ed.) 1990.)

The reasons for the non-appearance in New Zealand of these tests, for this purpose, appear to lie firstly in the curriculum aims of teachers, especially their desire to "start with the individual child, where he or she is"; secondly, in the more open-ended New Zealand curriculum; thirdly, because primary-school accountability in New Zealand has not been based on inappropriate and unreliable use of standardised tests; and finally, in what one might see as a confident "can-do" approach, particularly in reading, which is regarded as the main stream of early school learning.

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In our structured interviews,[20] we asked the teachers of our sample children and the assistant principals of the 10 schools in our study to tell us their aims, or what they hoped to achieve with the children, and we asked the teachers for the 3 most important things they hoped children would learn in their time with them.

Assistant Principals

"Independence", or "taking responsibility for themselves" was the dominant theme amongst the aims of assistant principals interviewed in 1989. Teacher creation of a stimulating and happy classroom environment which would make the children happy to be at school followed, along with helping children achieve their full potential, and then children's sharing, co-operating, or interacting with other children.[21] It is interesting that those who regarded their classroom approach as more formal than others nonetheless shared this emphasis on the happiness of children as a key to their successful learning.

All of these broad aims share an appreciation of learning as a dynamic relationship between individual children and their particular environment, with the responsibility on the teacher to encourage or bring out those attitudes and behaviours which would allow the child to make the most opportunity of their new classroom environment. The first years of school are seen as the foundation years, with a long-term impact for individual children's school and, sometimes, adult life.

First-year Teachers (NE, NE/J1, J1)

A common cluster of interrelated aims was also given by the new entrant teachers in the study.[22] Independence was still dominant, but fleshed out as "good work habits - able to work without distraction" or "able to choose".

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[20] Appendix 2 contains a full set of the interview schedules for teachers, parents, and children.

[21] It is interesting to compare these aims with other teachers. Recent first-year New Zealand teacher-trainee views of the most important things they hoped to be able to do for children in their class are reported in Renwick and Vize (1991). Enjoyable learning, developing children's self-confidence, and achievement in basic skills were common; but not so children's relationships with each other. Lewis's (1988) study of primary Japanese classrooms found 3 salient features relating to classroom management: new entrant teachers sought to make the children behaviourally independent in the classroom by emphasising what she terms "procedural skills"; they emphasised the importance of friendship and peer relations, building up group structures in the class which enabled the children to carry much responsibility for classroom management; and they had an emphasis on developing the whole child rather than on purely academic skills. Lewis cites this stress on the whole child, on social as well as academic aspects, as a likely source of higher Japanese student motivation in comparison with their United States peers. Another writer in the busy field of Japanese:American comparisons concludes that Japanese achievement may be higher because effort rather than ability is believed to yield results; and because interpersonal co-operation rather than competition is fostered, locating a sense of responsibility inside the individual rather than reliant on exterior forms of control (Holloway, 1988). The New Zealand primary classroom, and teachers' aims for their children, would appear from these descriptions to be closer to the Japanese than American, though by no means identical.

[22] In 2 cases, the assistant principal was also a new entrant teacher. Most of the new entrant teachers had been teaching for more than 5 years, and all were women.

> Breaking the apron strings, getting children to make their own decisions about their own learning.

> To have pride in their work, to know if they've done well or slacked off a bit - to be able to assess themselves a bit.

It was important that the new entrant children felt that "school was an OK place to be", that it provided both security and enjoyment: "They'll be interested in learning if they enjoy it". It was also important that the children achieved success in their work: "to know they're capable of producing things", "to produce to the best of their ability". Getting on with other children was more prominent in the teachers' aims than those of the assistant principals, perhaps reflecting their day-to-day classroom experience: "to think of others, not just themselves" "to learn to share, to get on with others in a group", and, a moral dimension, "to learn a sense of fairness".

What this cluster of aims recognises is that while children need to be active in their learning (McDonald *et al.* 1991), the classroom environment which gives them their learning opportunities is largely set. Children's individual differences can only be accommodated within a common framework. In this respect, the "social" aims of the teachers dovetail with and support their "academic" aims (*see also* Renwick 1984, pp. 100-101).

Eight of the 15 teachers noted that their aims were different for each child, according to their needs and ability. It is interesting that these teachers were in schools where a substantial proportion of new entrants came without early childhood education experience, and from poor homes or homes where English was not the first language. Teachers at 2 of these schools also gave the particular aim of wanting to "foster an interest in books".

New entrants come into the school with different experiences and skills. They also come into a teacher's classroom at different times of the year. It is primarily for these 2 reasons that none of the new entrant teachers set common curriculum goals for their classes. Certainly, they all wanted the children to be reading at a simple level, or close to it, to be able to write some letters, and to have grasped some mathematical concepts such as differences in size and shape, and some numeration below 10. But they would not expect a child who had the advantage of the classroom environment for only 3 months to be at the same reading or writing level as a child who had been in their class all year.

Second-year Teachers (J1, J1-2, J2)

The cluster of common aims was similar for second-year teachers. Independence was seen in the context of good work habits, "being able to use time profitably", "being able to initiate", "able to say if they don't understand something", "able to make appropriate choices", "to be able to get on with their own work without distracting other children", and "to use appropriate behaviour at the appropriate time". This is not a completely individually set idea of independence: it is an independence within the set classroom context, and refers to the children's ability to access the resources there.

> When they're inside, to use inside voices, when they're outside, to use outside voices; when someone's talking to them, know they have to sit still and listen. I think that will help them in later life if they learn that now.

To some extent, this emphasis stemmed from the limitations on teacher initiation of interaction with individual children because of the size of their classes (the average class size in the 1990 second-year classes was 26, ranging from 19 to 31).

> They're still terribly immature and quite dependent on the teacher to do everything for them. But if you go for quality teaching time, you don't have a lot of time for domestic things.

But the emphasis on independence also meshes well with the teachers' perception that much of the children's learning achievement depended on their attitude to learning and on their engagement in learning tasks. It was the role of the teacher to encourage the growth of internal positive attitudes. As one teacher expressed it:

> A very positive attitude to learning is crucial with young children like this, because I feel we set the attitudes for the rest of their school careers - the attitudes that they virtually go through their lives with.

The development of positive attitudes was related to the equally common aim of "always trying their best in everything".

While comparisons of present with past performance remained as a gauge of their progress, other comparisons were emerging for the teachers. Chronological age of the children as a standard against which to set individual children's performance made its appearance for half the teachers. Age is the linchpin of much standardised achievement throughout primary school, and the ground for the proposed national monitoring, through light multiple matrix sampling, in the Achievement Initiative. Age is not necessarily synonymous with class level.

The other half of the second-year teachers in the study used "up to the level of their ability" as a gauge of progress. This could also refer to "exterior" standards such as reading-book level, mathematics checkpoint, or work-sheet mastery, where teachers' expectations of the range of achievement possible for children have been developed by their experience with previous second-year or neighbouring classes.

The common aim of developing social skills was couched in words such as "respect" and "responsibility": teachers wanted the children to respect "other people and their property", "to listen to the teacher and other children", "to work with people at their table, to share a sometimes small amount of equipment", "to learn to accommodate individual differences", "to take responsibility for their own actions and behaviours", and "to have the self-esteem that enables respect for others".

> Schooling is basically a social activity. You must get on with others, must understand how to relate to others because so much of it is group work - to a certain extent because of the size of the classes.

Half the teachers also expressed an aim which overlaps the aims of independence and "academic" achievement. They hoped they had instilled in their children the desire to go on learning, because they were happy in their learning.[23]

> If a child isn't happy in class, they can get switched off learning quite considerably.

Only one teacher coupled a desire that "children be keen to do their work" with an equal

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[23] Elley (personal communication 27 January 1993) has provided information on standard 3 teachers' aims in reading from the IEA 1990-1991 Study of Reading Literacy which shows that New Zealand teachers at this level placed more weight on making reading enjoyable (mean 3.6) than the mean for the top 4 countries (2.1), and on developing a lasting interest in reading (mean 4.0 compared with 3.0). (New Zealand was sixth at this age, and only 2 points behind the overall mean for the fourth.) This emphasis also accords with material gathered with Canterbury teachers of S2 to F2 in 1984.

keenness that they should want to "please the teacher".

In their more specific aims for curriculum areas, the overarching aim of independence found expression in self-correcting skills in reading, and in starting to use a dictionary to check spelling before written work was shown to the teacher.

Other more specific curriculum aims encompassed children reading to their age level or beyond, printing legibly, writing in sentences (beginning to master full stops and capitals), expanding the range of their written work, for example, writing longer and/or more imaginative or descriptive stories, and spelling more words correctly. Mathematical aims ranged from the unspecified "developing the concepts, language and experiences to build on" in 1 multicultural school in a low-income area to the very definite "finished BSM cycle 8" for teachers in 2 schools with little in common with each other in terms of intake (1 had a substantial Maori, low-income intake with little early childhood educational experience plus some middle-class children; the other's intake came from middle-class, often professional, homes).

Third-year Teachers (J2, S1)

A similar set of aims continued through with most of the third-year teachers who taught the children in our study. Independence included the second-year meanings of good work habits, "being organised". It also meant "children having a say in their own learning". Half the teachers who mentioned independence as one of their aims for the year also linked it with a perception of their role as "facilitator", "manager".

> I don't want the children to see me as the provider, but the facilitator of their learning.

> I see my role more as being a teacher manager, setting the standards and expectations for children . . . it's the beginning of their being self-directed.

Again the self-direction they sought for the children was within the context of the classroom, meeting the teacher's standards.

Linked to the ability to act and think independently was the importance of self-esteem, confidence, or knowing their own worth, so that children could "have a positive attitude to life", "be prepared to have a go", "be free to make mistakes", "try new things, not stagnate at one level".

Half the teachers continued to mention their aim of having children "showing progress at their own rate".

Respect for others, and their property, went a little beyond the tolerance sought by first- and second-year teachers to an emphasis on solving interpersonal problems: "a fair go for everyone", and "controlling their anger".

The sense of this third year as a transition year between the more "seamless" curriculum of the junior school (McDonald *et al.* 1991) and the more "formal" approach in standard 1 or 2 classrooms was marked amongst the teachers, and underlay their major aims for the children.

> Next year they're going to a more structured environment, they can't just wander around.

In their specific curriculum goals, for example, they were more likely to set a minimal level which they wanted for all the class, particularly in mathematics. The minimal level was related to the content and setting-out standards of the next year's curriculum. Minimal reading goals centred round "fluency", and a reading level at the child's chronological age.

Comprehension of content became more important. Fluency and longer passages were the 2 major goals in writing, with mastery of specific grammar goals such as complete sentences, and using capital letters and full stops correctly. Children were also beginning to make the transition between printed and joined handwriting.

These aims suggest a diagnostic assessment environment centred around practices which enable teachers to check progress related to the acquisition of "skills" more than factual knowledge. The checking of progress is mainly done in two ways:

- checking present performance against previous performance of an individual child, and
- checking individual performance against curriculum covered.

Often the 2 comparisons are done in 1 assessment, such as running records or BSM checkpoints. Reading assessments may also have an inbuilt "age" standard with which to compare children's achievement.

Unless there were continuing problems in a child's behaviour which suggested calling in an outside health expert (physical or psychological), the checking of progress on "attitudes" and work habits, such as concentration, was usually done within the framework of other assessments, or through teacher observation, rather than as a separate exercise.

Given that all the teachers in the study who taught 5-year-olds saw themselves responding to each child individually, how did they gauge their learning needs? What did they know of the children who came their way? The main outside sources of information for new entrant teachers were parents and early childhood education teachers.

Information from Parents

Information from parents came both formally, through the material recorded in written enrolment forms, and informally, through conversation with parents when they brought a child to class. In 6 of the 10 schools in the study, parents were encouraged to bring their child into the classroom for several short visits before the child officially started school. While this allows the child to find the first official day less alien than it might be otherwise, and the parent - usually the mother - to absorb something of the classroom atmosphere and, perhaps, its programme, it also allows the parent to offer relevant information on the child to the teacher, such as interests and character. And it allows the teacher to gain some initial impressions of the child's reaction to the novel classroom environment. The opportunity for information exchange is also made when parents bring or pick up their children.[24]

The written enrolment forms for the 10 schools covered practical matters such as parents' names, occupations, work and home phone numbers, contact names and numbers if parents were unavailable in an emergency, and the names of the family doctor and dentist.

Other information commonly sought related to factors which are known to influence children's initial school achievement: health, home language, and early childhood education experience.[25]

Health was variably covered. The Principals' Federation 1984 general enrolment form, used in 2 of the schools, specifies allergies, medication, sight, speech, hearing, and "serious problems"; others specified 2 or 3 items only, usually allergies, hearing, and sight. Tetanus injections were specified for 2 schools with large multicultural low- to middle-income intakes.

In 1989, when this study began, public health nurses were still doing checks of every 5-year-old; this service ceased the same year. Several assistant principals commented to us in 1991 that they felt the loss of the universal checks, and the chance for the public health nurse to pick up other information from parents during the course of their check. The onus is now on schools to refer any individual children for checks, though area health boards (now defunct) were still checking the hearing and vision of every child in their first

[24] One school with a multicultural and usually low-income intake began new entrant teacher visits to the child in their home or early childhood centre in 1991.

[25] A cogent study of the advantages children with early childhood educational experience enjoy over those who have had only care at home can be found in Clarke-Stewart (1991). More recent overviews of the research literature can be found in Podmore (1993) and Wylie (1994).

year of school in 1989.[26]

Most, but not all, enrolment forms also sought the ethnic identity of the child, the parents' ethnicity or nationality, and the language spoken at home. The 2 schools which did not ask for the ethnic status of the child or parents were both integrated schools with very varied intakes.

Most, but not all the schools also sought the name or type of the child's early childhood education, and 3 also sought the time the child had spent in early childhood education.

Children's interests were covered only in the 2 schools which used the Principals' Federation forms, which asks about private lessons, such as music, and "hobbies/interests/clubs", and in the 1 school which had a sheet for teachers to fill in after interviewing the child's parent(s). This sheet also covered parents' views on their child's attitude to beginning school, independence from mother, self-confidence, listening skills, reliability, and abilities. The school had a high multicultural low- to middle-income intake.

Information from Early Childhood Education Centres

Most of the schools had regular contact with their nearest early childhood education centre, usually the local kindergarten, and children about to come to school often visited with their early childhood education teachers, allowing a similar informal channel for information about these individual children to be given to their new entrant teacher. For example, teachers at a school with both a large open-plan, vertically grouped composite class and a single-cell class discussed with the neighbouring playcentre supervisors which of these options would be most suitable for individual playcentre children coming through.

However, the only situation where formal information was passed between early childhood education service and school was in the one school with an attached early childhood centre. Here an early childhood education record card accompanied the child to his or her new class, giving teacher assessments of the child's ability in language, reading, and mathematics; attitude to work; and character.

Information within the Class Programme

To adults whose test memory is of hushed rooms, time limits, and responding to written questions or circling multiple choice options, the deliberate assessment practices of new entrant teachers may seem informal, or even invisible. Within normal class activities, teachers observe and record individual behaviour such as "handles book, turns pages correctly", put a simple tick against an activity in developmental or choice time, or make notes while a child reads to them. At lunchtime or after school they may make further recordings of observations they have made. Apart from the running records of reading derived from Marie Clay's work, or the checkpoints from the BSM curriculum materials,

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[26] In theory, parents of new entrants now receive a small booklet which includes their own assessment of their child's health, and immunisation records: this is supposed to be returned to the area health board for public health nurses to follow up. However, the return rate is low. The unsolicited view of the 2 assistant principals who showed us the booklet in 1991 was that many of the parents at their multicultural, often low-income intake school would not understand it, and were likely to fill it in incorrectly. Thackery *et al.* (1992) also found that "health forms are the most likely type of form to be sent home, and the least likely to be returned to school", and recommended the translation of health forms into languages other than English - which has begun - and a further study of the "effectiveness of the present arrangements for checking the health status of five-year-olds" (p. 35).

most of the assessments which new entrant teachers in this study made in recorded form were school created by teachers past and present or the assistant principal. Assessment material used in the new entrant classrooms in this study drew on other material, particularly from the advisory service, and teachers' previous experience within the school or other schools. It was geared to providing material which would be of practical use to the teacher, and which could be done quickly or simply.

In the Beginning ...

> Children may need a few weeks to settle at school before the tasks are given. [to find out the nature and extent of children's numeracy concepts] (Young-Loveridge, 1991b)

None of the new entrant teachers in this study would put much credence on the results of assessments carried out on a child's first day at school. In their experience, the new and demanding nature of the school environment for most children meant that their early behaviour could be atypical. Children's behaviour at this age also varies considerably from day to day, a conclusion also reached in research on children's test behaviour (Smith 1989). By the end of the first month of school, however, all the new entrant teachers had some record of language and mathematics performance which provided indications of what a child could tackle next, or the particular areas in which he or she needed help and practice.

Reading

Assessment for reading was usually recorded, and drew on skills identified as useful reading behaviours by Marie Clay. Did the children handle books (turn the pages) correctly? Did they know that a line is read from left to right? Did they know what a word was? Did they recognise their own name? Most scored a child's knowledge of basic words (such as *I, am, here* . . .) drawn from Clay's work, or the teacher's own compilation of the most common words to be found in the beginning reading books used in the school. The score on basic words, coupled with a successive demonstration of appropriate reading behaviours, indicated to teachers that children were ready to start "independent" reading at the bottom rung of the reading ladder.

Appendix 4 includes copies of some of the check lists that were in use.[27] Number 4 in this appendix was no longer used by the school in 1991 because it was found to be insufficiently specific to pick up the areas needing attention, especially for children with English as a second language. It should be noted here that none of the schools in the study was bicultural; English was taken for granted as the language of instruction. All the assessment of children's reading performance in the classrooms in this study was done in English.

Oral Language

Assessment for oral language was less systematic. One new entrant class had such material from its attached early childhood education centre report. Three other schools did some recording of skills; all 3 had substantial numbers of Maori or non-Pakeha children,

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[27] The report by Thackery *et al.* (1992) of new entrant assessment practices based on work carried out toward the end of 1990 includes very clear examples of the range of assessment methods used by new entrant teachers.

from low- to middle-income homes, often without early childhood education experience. One school used part of the Record of Oral Language; the discarded check list mentioned above, which was used by another school, also covered oral language (in English); and a third had 8 items in a larger check list, such as "can speak in a sentence clearly" and "can ask and answer a question". The check list was given within a month of school, and redone 2 months later to gauge progress and problem areas.

Handwriting

Handwriting assessment was often done in the same check list of reading skills by asking the child to write her or his name. Two schools also gave the children a sheet of letters and numerals (0-9) to copy, and noted any letters formed incorrectly, as a guide for their instruction. Any incorrect pencil grip was also noted in all schools.

Mathematics

For mathematics, the first checkpoint in BSM was used in all 9 of the schools using BSM within the first month to confirm whether the child should continue with first-cycle work, or whether the child could move to the second cycle. In 1 school this checkpoint was used to decide which ability group the child should go into. The school which was not using BSM gauged progress by correct answers on similar areas (for example, set formation) on teacher-devised work sheets, and used the results to devise the next set of individual work sheets, providing more practice in areas not yet mastered, or moving on to those new areas where mastery had been shown.

Physical and Attitudinal Skills

Two schools also noted physical and attitudinal skills within the first month. Both these schools served significant numbers of children with no early childhood educational experience. For internal school use, one noted items such as "can use scissors" "understands and obeys simple instructions", "apathetic, seemingly content to do nothing". The marking system was a 4-point range: yes, sometimes, not always, or no. There was a column to record any change 2 months later. In the other school, the record went home and may have served a dual purpose of giving parents/caregivers some idea of the school's expectations and programme with entries such as "I settle down to work", "I join in our shared books", and "I am interested in the world around me". Again the marking system was a 4-point range: consistently, frequently, occasionally, not yet. Subsequent progress was not noted, and the school has since dropped this assessment and is currently working on something which would show progress between different time points. At 2 of the schools, other staff also used the Goodenough "draw a man" non-verbal test of children's general ability for children who seemed, from their observations, to have difficulty adjusting to classroom routine and settling into work.[28]

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[28] One school was no longer doing this in 1991; the remedial teacher in the other thought it was a useful test, particularly for picking up on visual difficulties which might impede reading progress. Neither of the 2 teachers using the test was registered to use tests of this type; neither had read any recent reviews of the test, nor had they discussed its usefulness and reliability for the school purposes with psychometric experts.

Reading

All but one school used Marie Clay's running records on a regular basis for each child, though not always at her recommended 3-weekly intervals. Some teachers did them more often (fortnightly) for all children, and others more often for children who did not seem to be making as much progress as others coming into school at the same time. In the remaining school, the teacher noted the accuracy of the child's reading of a book at their present level, and the accuracy of their sight reading of basic (common) words at that level. In all schools, the purpose of the regular monitoring was to decide whether a child was ready to proceed to the next level in the reading ladder, and to identify any strategy or skill difficulties which the child might be having in reading. Teachers felt that children could be moved up or down a reading level, and change groups accordingly; but they appeared careful to avoid demotion. If children were not making progress, they were more likely not to move on to another group when others from their group moved, or, to be joined by younger children to make a new group.

Most teachers or their assistant principals kept a class record enabling a comparison of the stages reached by different children, and the range of reading levels within a class. Only 2 teachers, however, graphed children's reading progress both individually and as a class, as recommended by Marie Clay (Clay 1979, pp. 180-185). Once a week testing of phonics was done in 1 classroom, and, until class numbers were too large to allow it, individual and class records kept of weekly progress.

Mathematics

BSM checkpoints were more commonly used on a group rather than an individual basis, unless a child seemed out of kilter with the ability group he or she had been working with, though children were usually individually checked at least twice a year. Our information indicates about the same level of regular monitoring of activities reported in the national BSM implementation study, which found a fifth of the teachers in their study monitoring each child at every mathematics session, and 54 percent at every second mathematics session, or once a week. Eleven percent had no regular time for monitoring (Bennie *et al.* 1990, p. 126). The school using work sheets continued to use those as a gauge of progress.

Writing

Correction was the main means of monitoring as children began to master letters, and start to write sentences or stories. Teachers in a few of the schools also "conferenced" regularly with the children, encouraging the children to find their own gaps and areas needing more work by going over their most recent writing with them on a group basis if children were in ability groups for writing, or else individually where they were not grouped.

Spelling

If spelling was seen in the context of writing vocabulary, it was usually checked during writing time. Most schools kept 2 lists at the end of children's writing books to cover "words I know" and "words I almost know", or used *Spell-Write* (Croft 1983) or *My Words* (Croft 1989) to provide the child with mastery and reference lists.

Other Curriculum and Social Areas

Teachers made many observations of children's social behaviour and attitudes, and worked to improve those which they thought were unhelpful to children's progress (their own, and, sometimes, others'). Some of these observations went into teachers' own personal workbooks for later checking. When we asked teachers questions about the sample children at midyear, at the start of the study, and again at the end of the year, we were impressed by the detail which teachers could give about each child.

Other curriculum areas such as science, social studies, and art were not usually the subject of individual assessment. Two schools made some record of what the class had covered in the teacher-prepared units, and of the class participation. Both forms of recording were very simple: most/some/none. The records were used in syndicate sessions to plan further units, or to guide unit preparation for next year's new entrants. Three teachers kept charts of which children had been doing what activity during developmental or choice-time, and used it to steer children who seemed stuck on one activity to others. One school had a check list for physical education, again simply noting what had been taught, and noting skills on a class rather than an individual basis. Oral language work was rarely a distinct curriculum area. Children's needs in this aspect were met with encouragement or continued repetition of opportunities during other curriculum sessions.

Child Self-Assessment

Writing was the curriculum area teachers usually mentioned when asked if the children assessed any of their own work. Children were asked to choose their best work in some new entrant classes for "publishing", that is, polishing a draft for display on the classroom wall, to take home to parents, or to put in a folder of their work to go on to the next teacher. Some teachers also mentioned, as a form of self-assessment, responses during writing or developmental sessions when the teacher was not satisfied with the child's work to questions such as "Is this your best work?", "Could you make this better?". Conferencing was also seen as having an element of self-assessment.

Two teachers mentioned self-assessment in unit work for science and social studies. In both cases, this meant involving the children in setting the objectives at the start of a unit, and commenting at the end on whether they thought they had mastered the self-set objectives. "[Self assessment] gives them something to try to do for themselves, it increases their self-worth", commented one.

Reporting to Others

Within the School

All the teachers kept folders for each individual child. Usually these contained the most recent running record or score on basic sight words for reading, reading level, the most recent BSM checkpoint in maths, and samples of stories, handwriting, and art. Most teachers updated the samples twice a year, usually in conjunction with their reporting to parents.

In 1989, 1 school was using the then draft Primary Progress Record, and thus recording progress in science, social studies, physical education, and social skills as well.

The material which went forward to the next teacher of the child varied from the full individual folder, through a set of checkpoints showing a child's reading level and mastery of mathematics concepts and knowledge without work samples, to class summaries which

showed reading and mathematics levels for all the children in the class. In most schools it was the role of the assistant principal to use the class summaries to decide future class composition.

Records kept within the school office were more sparse, and in some schools could contain different material for each child. Generally there was some record of reading and mathematics levels or coverage at the end of the year, with attendance and enrolment data. The draft Primary Progress Record was included for 1 school.

Reporting to Parents

All the assistant principals and teachers felt that parents could come in at any time to see the teacher if they had a query about their child, or information they wanted to pass on. If teachers had a concern or query (for example, the continuing sleepiness of 1 child), they reported that they would phone parents, or send a note home with the child, often with their reading book (particularly if parents were asked to sign reading books to show that the work had been done).

Other information on children's progress which parents would receive from the school during the course of the year was contained in the reading books sent home for children to read to their parents. Some teachers felt that some parents, particularly those with older children, had a good idea of the levels and colour coding of reading books - though the colour coding had changed from previous years. Parents could also gain some indication of their child's writing progress through completed exercise books or "published" work sent home. Writing books were unlikely to go home until they were full, because teachers did not want to risk losing their own record of the child's progress, and the list of mastered words which the books often contained. Mathematics workbooks were sent home when full by the school which used them. BSM does not lend itself as well to written work, and so evidence of mathematics progress was less likely to reach parents who did not visit their child's classroom. Art and unit work would also go home after it had been displayed.

In most schools, information about the class programme and organisation was covered in initial interviews with parents, or left to parents to discover or ask about when they came in and out of the classroom. Parent (often mother) help, which is also an additional opportunity for parents to see and understand more of the class programme, was used in 3 of the schools; assistant principals and some teachers in others saw some problems with parent help, which could conflict with the aim of making children more independent. Two of the schools made concerted efforts to inform parents about their programmes through evening meetings, especially where they felt significant changes had occurred since the parents themselves were at school, or where they were serving diverse communities. One teacher at a multicultural school commented:

> We don't get much parent contact here - partly it's a language thing, although we had one meeting in the middle term to tell people about the reading and writing programme, and it was mostly Samoan fathers who came, which was really exciting. I don't know how much they understood. When I realised, I wished I had had the Samoan teacher here to translate. The next time we do that I'll make sure I do.

All the new entrant teachers reported orally and informally at midyear to parents. One school also provided a midyear written report for children who had been at the school for at least a term as well as the more usual end-of-year written report. Only 1 school gave another oral rather than written report at the end of year. Most reports went home to

parents (via the children) in the last few days of the school year, though at least 1 school sent its reports home a week before the school closed to allow for parent feedback. The teachers in our study said that few parents commented on or queried the reports with them, which is not surprising, given the timing of the reports.

Written reports to parents were often reviewed by assistant principals before their signing by school principals. Teachers drew on their assessment records and their workbooks to write the reports. Although 1 long-serving teacher could write a report in 20-25 minutes, most of the new entrant teachers said they took about 45 minutes. It was common for teachers to focus on the individual child's progress, comparing present with previous, rather than comparing the child with others in the class. It was more likely for teachers to compare children if there were other children who had come in at the same time. None of the report forms had numerical or alpha grades; all provided comments on different aspects of the curriculum as well as an overall comment. The "technical" terms and shorthands used in the school records (e.g., "BSM 2/1") were not reproduced in reports to parents.

The tone of the reports for the sample children in our study was positive. The focus was on reporting what a child *could* do, and the aspects of the class programme that they had enjoyed and shown interest in. A negative summary comment such as "not trying" did not appear in our sample children's reports. Where there were aspects of a child's work or behaviour that teachers thought needed improvement, the comments were along the lines of "lacks confidence" in a given area or activity, "Mary seems interested in topic work but doesn't often contribute to discussions", "beginning to self-correct [in reading], although his difficulties with understanding the story plot sometimes get him muddled", "Simon could show more concern for others, although there has been a great improvement in his relationship with his peers".

Four of the new entrant teachers included direct statements of encouragement for children as well as parents (e.g., "Well done John"; "Good start Nina - keep it up!"). These children were all low achievers. These same teachers also made suggestions to parents of low-achieving children for useful things they could do with their children (e.g., discussing with the child the content of the book they have read, "practice with seriation" (arranging things in the order of their size). The report form for 1 school (in a middle-class, professional area) gave a list of suggestions for work with children at home, including:

> . . . develop letter games and letter sound associations. Play games like "I Spy", "Guess What", and read alphabet books . . . . Family visits to places of interest. Use these experiences as a focus for discussion and language development.

4 ASSESSMENT IN THE SECOND YEAR OF SCHOOL (J1, J1-2, J2)

The age range of our sample children at the start of their second year of school was 5 years 4 months to 6 years 1 month, and the length of their school experience varied accordingly. The younger children, and some of those who were making slower progress, sometimes remained with their new entrant teacher, or were joined by the new entrant children in a new class. School naming of classes varies, and provides no uniform code for parents and others to decipher children's level of achievement. Children in J1 classes, for example, can be reading at the same level or doing similar mathematics work as children in J2 classes.

Beginning of the Year

Assistant principals usually formed classes from the reading levels that children had achieved at the end of the previous year. It seemed to be the custom in 9 of the 10 schools to try to provide each teacher with a full range of "ability" (the term teachers often used informally as a shorthand for achievement). Class streaming, then, did not usually take place as a result of first-year assessment results, though it did occur in 1 school.

Children's behaviour and relationships with each other were also used to decide classrooms and groupings. For example, 2 children whose friendship was felt to distract them both from their work were put into separate classes in their second year; and there was some effort put into ensuring that not all the children who had "played up" in their new entrant class or demanded excessive teacher attention went to 1 teacher. In the 2 vertically grouped classes in the study which covered NE to S1, the sample children did not change class, but, as in other classes, their reading levels were used to group them for instruction within the class. Mathematics levels, as registered in BSM checkpoints or the last module and cycle covered, were used to group the children in schools using BSM for mathematics instruction.

Again teachers did not believe that first-day performance was a correct gauge of children's past achievement and learning level. The well-documented[29] effects of the summer holiday break meant that the children needed some revision of ground covered on their return to school life. The assessment emphasis in the first few weeks of school was to monitor the children, and to regroup those whose present performance was different from the end-of-year level which had been used to group them. While teachers used information from children's previous teachers on achievement levels, they were less likely to look at their comments on a child's behaviour or social skills, unless the child was having marked difficulties in their own classroom. The reasons for this are discussed later.

Some children's reputation preceded them, of course, and second-year teachers often had experience of the children coming to them through their playground duties. Where children were having difficulties, teachers would consult with the previous teacher, if still in the school, to find out what strategies they had used in an attempt to find the most effective way to handle and encourage the child.

Four of the schools had a "meet the teacher" session in the first 2 or 3 months of the year. This was seen as an opportunity for parents to provide any relevant information on

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[29] This is one reason why the *Progressive Achievement Tests* (*PATs*) are normed on March results.

the child, and to ask any questions they had about the class programme. It was not seen as a session for teachers to report on the children's progress, because teachers felt they had little to report at that stage, other than how well the child had settled back into the school routine. All the teachers felt that parents could come and see them if they were worried about their child. The same channel of teacher-parent communication as the first year existed through comments in the reading books going home.

Continuing Assessment Patterns

The major change from the pattern of assessment practices reported for new entrant classrooms is that most children were given a general test of their language achievement when they individually turned 6, or shortly after.

The 6-Year Reading Net

Nine of the schools used Marie Clay's "6-Year Reading Net". All children were tested in 8 of the schools, with coverage in the ninth focusing mainly on children who were not achieving as well as their age peers. In this school, the 6-Year Reading Net was done once a term, rather than at each individual's birthday. Reading Recovery operated in all these 9 schools, and in most the 6-Year Reading Net testing was done by the teacher(s) responsible for Reading Recovery. The main purpose of using the 6-Year Reading Net was to identify children who were not reading or writing basic words consonant with their chronological age, and to direct their teaching accordingly. This meant going on to the Reading Recovery programme where there was room for the child, or providing additional teacher attention and work on the specific gaps or weak strategies identified through the tests.

The 6-Year Reading Net is essentially a diagnostic assessment instrument, which is also norms-based. In 3 schools, data from the tests were collated annually by the assistant principal and used to identify areas where children generally were not achieving as well as their chronological age, or achieving in the lower rather than mid or upper stanines (bands).[30] Analysis of this kind had resulted in changes to programmes: for example, daily writing sessions and more attention to basic words, and changes in class organisation which allowed more attention to low achievers (for example, by 1 teacher taking 2 "classes" at a time, allowing the other teacher to work more intensively with small groups of children, without the distraction of other children in the same space). One school with a non-teaching assistant principal kept summary data showing the range of achievement in each of the subtests over the previous 4 years, and was able to demonstrate noticeable rises in stanine levels over that period, rises which she thought were due to this analysis and subsequent changes to classroom programmes and organisation.

Children's 6-Year Reading Net results were kept within children's individual folders, and where the school (now) used the Primary Progress Record, results and gaps in strategies were sometimes transferred.

The school which used neither the 6-Year Reading Net nor the Reading Recovery programme had a remedial teacher whose responsibilities included the identification of

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[30] Apparently such monitoring in other schools using the process writing approach has sometimes led to a contrary emphasis on spelling for 5-year-olds, where the 6-Year Reading Net spelling subtest results have been in the lower stanines. This could be an interesting case of "teaching to the test", rather than using tests which suit the curriculum aims.

children who were "at risk" of low achievement. In recent years, she had shifted her effort to children in the first and second years of school because she thought early intervention was more successful than remedial work further along in school life. This is the same perception that informs the Reading Recovery programme. In this school, all children were given the Burt word test when they turned 6, and if they scored below their chronological age, a prose inventory. Scores were fed back to class teachers, and any discrepancies between their reading group level and the scores discussed usually resulted in the child being regrouped. The remedial teacher kept the children's results.

Reading

Running records were continued in the 9 schools using them, and were usually done every 2 to 3 weeks. One school focused mainly on children reading at the lower levels; otherwise, all children were covered. Results were used to direct teacher attention to particular areas, to decide children's movement on to the next level, and, sometimes, to change reading groups. The tenth school monitored reading progress through children reading to the teacher, and weekly testing of sight words for the children's reading level. The results were used in a similar fashion as running records. One teacher using running records also used a Burt word test for her children as a check on word knowledge.

Children's reading levels at the end of the year were recorded in their individual folders in all schools. Two schools also included running record results, though these are said by their developer to be out of date 3 weeks after they are done (Department of Education 1985b, p. 121). Two teachers did a graph twice a year of children's individual reading progress, and 1 teacher did a chart 5 times a year of the class achievement as a whole. One teacher who started to do graphs of children's individual progress abandoned the effort half way through the year due to other pressures on her workload.

Mathematics

Most of the teachers using BSM reported daily monitoring of whether the objectives of the module had been met, and checkpointed at the end of cycles. One teacher did checkpointing "only where necessary". Time for doing checkpoints was as much a problem for second year as for new entrant teachers. Teachers in the school using work sheets continued to use corrections of children's work as their source of information on the children's progress.

Writing

Correction of work continued to be the main assessment practice, with self-assessment of the quality of work, usually in relation to the child's previous work, as in "Is this your best work?" Inspired by a course she went on, 1 teacher began to involve the children in a daily comparison of their present and previous work, resulting in a list at the back of their writing book of skills "I am learning to" as a way of providing more structure to her monitoring. Several schools had regular conferencing sessions where children and teacher discussed the children's work, and decided on aspects that needed attention.

Spelling

Two schools now had regular weekly spelling tests of words which the children took home to learn. Spelling was also corrected and discussed during writing conferencing.

Oral Language

The school using the Record of Oral Language continued to assess the level children were at once a year.

Other Curriculum and Social Areas

There still seemed to be little systematic or recorded assessment of work in other areas. Teachers in 4 schools had done some assessing in relation to social studies and science units. This ranged from oral questioning of the children as a class at the end of a unit, to detailed check lists for a science unit which were time consuming. One teacher abandoned the check lists for science and social studies she had compiled "because the children were too young".

One school had a library card which included a check list with several levels, the first of which could be met in the second year of school.

Child Self-Assessment

As at the new entrant level, responses to teachers' questions about work quality and decisions on publishing or display were the most common examples given of child self-assessment. Questions about work quality seemed to become more specific: several teachers mentioned neatness and care as well as the more general "best". Three schools started to put more emphasis on proofreading work for publication, including techniques such as children underlining words which they thought were incorrectly spelt, checking their words in a dictionary or with the words put up on the classroom wall, discussing words with a friend, and underlining a second time if they remained unsure of the spelling of a word. Several schools got children to read their written work to each other, and encouraged the children to give positive peer review, for example, by thinking of things they liked about the other child's story, and going on to pose questions they had (such as "what happened to the cat?"). The reasons given for peer review were that it would encourage children to do their best work, help them to be critical of their own, and encourage them to extend what they could do, particularly in the spheres of improved description and action in their narratives.

Reporting to Others

Within the School

Our data for second-year classrooms were collected in 1990 and 1991. By this time the Primary Progress Record was more common, though it was not found in all the schools in the study. Half the teachers were recording information on the categories in the Record at midyear and at the end of the year; 1 was recording information only once a year; and 2, three times a year. Children's folders held twice-yearly samples of art and written work in most schools, though some teachers were discouraged by the lack of interest in samples shown by their colleagues further up the school. Again, technical comments or shorthand such as the BSM modules covered were more likely to appear in internal reports than in the reports to parents.

Reporting to Parents

Oral reports were given to parents in all schools at midyear. Some teachers assembled work samples to show parents, and 1 had the latest running record and mathematics

checkpoint to hand. Most of the oral discussions were brief, though 1 teacher spent up to three-quarters of an hour with parents. (The parents of only half of her 19 pupils turned up.)

One school gave written reports twice a year; the others once, at the end of the year. Eight of the reports gave comments on the curriculum areas, social and personal development, a general summary of character, class participation, and approach to school life. Like the new entrant reports, the tone was positive, descriptive rather than judgmental, and identified what the child could do, sometimes comparing present with past achievement or approach. Comparisons were not made with others in the class, nor were alpha or numeric grades given. Somewhat more was made of children's contribution to their class, and their "enjoyment" than in the first-year reports.

Two reports combined brief comments with check lists: 1 specified aspects of different areas such as, under Printing, "Can write along a line with correct spacing", and under Mathematics, "Can easily understand new work", and had 3 categories for each item: consistently, usually, and seldom. No negative behaviour or attitudes were included. The other report form gave brief comments on curriculum areas, with ticks or blanks against specific aspects of social and personal development, both positive and negative, such as "works well on set tasks" and "easily influenced by others". This form also provided overall grading of the children in 3 areas: general progress, home study, and listening skills through ticks in 1 of 4 columns: very good, good, satisfactory, limited.

Interestingly, only 1 suggestion about activities parents could do with particular children to help their academic or social development was made in the second-year reports of our sample children. This was:

> Marama would benefit from lots of reading practice over the holidays in order to maintain her good reading skills.

Two teachers at 1 school directed final comments to half their children, praising them for their work during the year, or wishing them a good holiday.

Continuing Assessment Patterns

Most assessment remained diagnostic, but there were moves to more formal kinds of assessment of children's achievement in either spelling or reading comprehension in half the schools. The children in our study were now between 7 years 1 month and 7 years 11 months old.

Class formation and grouping on the basis of reading achievement at the end of the previous year remained common practice. One teacher had picked up the Goodenough draw-a-man test from the school's remedial teacher as an interesting way of gaining additional insight into the abilities of her pupils.[31] Four schools invited parents in to meet the teacher, 2 in conjunction with information sessions for parents (1 on the writing programme, and 1 on homework purposes, to get parents to use the same tools as teachers).

Reading and Comprehension

Running records were no longer done for high-level readers in 2 schools. "High" in 1 school meant children reading 5 "years" above their chronological age. In another school, the strategies of "high" readers, especially self-correction, were only checked by running records once a term. Comprehension tasks or tests additional to the story retelling included in the running records were introduced in 3 schools, all with middle-class or skilled-trades home backgrounds. At the beginning of the year, 3 schools used the *Progressive Achievement Test: Listening*, and 1, for children who had finished the graded reading series, the *Progressive Achievement Test: Reading Comprehension* (though this is normed for standard 2, not standard 1). This school also used a prose inventory derived from the Wellington school advisory service at monthly intervals. Another school used a comprehension test at midyear and at the end of the year in a more official "test" format than other schools. The Burt word test was used in 2 schools.

Mathematics

Five of the schools using BSM in the first 2 years of school now turned to the New Growth programme developed by the Wellington Maths Group for use from standard 1 to form 2. The others continued with BSM. In this New Growth programme, children's knowledge and ability to use concepts is checked before work starts on a unit, and after the unit, checked again to see if they now master the material covered. Gaps in skills and knowledge are covered again if they have not been mastered. Daily monitoring of what children cover is also included. Some of the lower-achieving children in our sample who were grouped across classes for mathematics continued with BSM. Basic number tasks of addition, subtraction, and multiplication were checked in regular written "tests" in several schools, most within set time limits.

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[31] In fact the test was not designed for this purpose, nor for use by unregistered users. The scoring method and their translation into ages in the particular version in use was also possibly out of date.

Spelling

Spelling became the subject of weekly tests in 6 schools, and twice-weekly in another. Teachers in 5 schools compiled individual lists (usually of about 10 words) derived from words children misspelt in their writing and words from the books they were reading independently, to learn as "homework", and be "tested" at the end of the week. Two other variants were a common school-created list for the children to master in the same time, and a compilation from Arvidson (1960), *Spell-Write* (Croft 1983), and written language and topic work done that week. In 2 schools, children heard each other's spelling to test it. Six schools used basic word lists for this age level from *Spell-Write* either to compile spelling lists or to check that individual lists were covering the same ground. One school also tested children at the end of each term, using the spelling levels from Arvidson, and 3 schools tested children twice a year.

Writing

One teacher did a 6-monthly check list of writing skills, such as the consistent use of capital letters, and several others kept regular notebooks, recording for the class what individual children were writing about and the progress made, for example in punctuation and development of original ideas. Conferencing was commonly used both as a teaching method, and a way to check pupil progress.

Social Studies and Science

Assessment of unit or topic work in science and social studies was done on a class basis in 5 of the schools, usually through discussion at the end. Teachers in 1 school had a formal scoring sheet to note their impressions of children's mastery of the unit objectives, covering knowledge, skills, and attitudes, and used a 3-point system to identify complete, partial, and inadequate mastery. One school continued its pattern of interactive learning, with the children identifying what they already knew and what they would like to know about a topic. Another school graded children's work within a unit or theme, with the children choosing the work they would like to be graded on. One school had a formal individual test of facts in social studies and science.

Child Self-Assessment

Apart from the example of self-assessment in social studies and science quoted in the previous paragraph, children's testing and correcting each other's spelling, and children being asked if they wanted to share something they had written with others in the class, children's self-assessment remained much as it had been in the second year, centred on written work and decisions to publish. One teacher initiated children reading each other's work out loud to the class. More use was made of dictionaries by the children to check their spelling, and in 1 classroom calculators were used to check mathematics work.

Reporting to Others

Within the School

The Primary Progress Cards were used in 9 of the schools, and individual folders including samples of children's art and written work were also kept. Two schools had developed their own check lists for all subject areas, to be completed for each child at the end of the year and passed on to their next teacher, like the Primary Progress Cards.

Class lists of reading and comprehension levels, and for mathematics levels or test results were also kept in all schools. One school was particularly systematic in collating this material to identify achievement levels across classes to identify any gaps which could be addressed by future teachers of second- and third-year children, and to plan future unit work. This school had a non-teaching assistant principal who also had a strong interest in assessment.

Reporting to Parents

Three schools now sent home written reports twice a year. The format and general language was much the same as for the second-year reports, with the addition of more comments on speed, amount, and presentation of work, and on the care with which children were approaching their work. Two schools now also sent home written reports in the first 2 terms so that the information could be of more use to parents, and also to draw on parents' aid for working with children whose behaviour they felt needed attention.

The number of oral interviews doubled (from 1 to 2) in 1 school. In another school, teacher and parents agreed on objectives for the children to cover in the next 4 months, and assessed how far these had been met at the next parent interview.

Differences between Schools

Schools which use different curriculum programmes are likely to differ in their assessment. The majority of the schools in our study were using the same reading and mathematics frameworks, and they used the accompanying tools of assessment which had been developed to go with them. These had been refined and disseminated to schools through the then Department of Education, school funding for Reading Recovery, and additional staffing in the 1:20 teacher:pupil ratio policy. The school which went its own way used the Price Milburn "Ready to Read" framework, a teacher-developed mathematics framework which incorporated some aspects of BSM, and, as an independent school, had had no Reading Recovery training or additional staffing through the Reading Recovery or 1:20 scheme.

Three of the 10 schools had a more comprehensive set of assessment practices in place in the junior school than others. The amount of systematic assessment done in the junior school classrooms in our study was related to 3 variables:

- the enthusiasm of individual teachers and assistant principals, in turn related to their belief that further or different assessment was beneficial;
- the availability of assessment tools which teachers trusted, and which they could easily customise; and
- the time available to assess and record.

Two of these 3 schools had large junior schools, which meant that assistant principals felt they had to be more systematic in their assessment than other schools because not every teacher who might teach a child would know the child well as an individual. The third school was a small school. Despite the difference in size, the 3 schools shared 2 factors:

- vertical or mixed-age grouping of children, i.e., ability grouping, either within or across classes; and
- some teacher-release or assistant-principal time was available.

These 2 factors alone do not appear to inspire more or more systematic assessment, as they were also found in several other schools in the study.

Teacher- or assistant-principal-release time was used to analyse the assessment records to decide whether modifications were necessary to classroom programmes and organisation as well as to carry out individual assessments. The intake of the 2 large schools was mainly monocultural and middle class; the small school had a substantial Maori, low-income component.

The junior school teachers took an ambivalent attitude to cumulative individual records on children.[32] On the one hand, they used and sometimes sought information about children's behaviour, attitudes, and achievements which came to them - often informally - from early childhood teachers, parents, and other teachers. If a problem arose with a child,

[32] This is well explored in Renwick (1984), pp. 34-40.

or they felt they were not handling a child well, they would look at records passed on from a child's previous teacher. On the other hand, they did not want to "prejudge" a child, or prejudice the next teacher's relationship with a child by their comments, based on their own experience, and they would often not look at records passed on to them until they had had the child for a month or more, unless the child arrived in their class mid stream.

The desire not to allow prejudgment or stereotyping usually applied to children with whom they had had difficult experiences, or who had not made great progress because of their behaviour, such as "dreaming", or "flitting about". There are 2 principal reasons for teachers' caution in using others' judgments. First, their experience that children's classroom behaviour can be influenced by the individual teacher, and change accordingly. Second, their awareness that children themselves change a great deal at this age, and what could be true 1 year might be altered in the next. Support for this view can be found in Irving (1991), and Petty and Field's (1980) analysis of the fluctuation in Australian primary school children's standardised IQ, English, and mathematics achievement test scores. The latters' conclusion was that these "were remarkably unstable for many children" (p. 198).

We can also see at work here the junior school emphasis in assessment on diagnosis (formative assessment) rather than summary judgment. Overseas studies of teachers' views on assessment instruments and practices have found similar emphases (Salmon-Cox 1981, Madaus 1981).

Teachers' Views and Assessment Preferences

As noted earlier, assessment practices which were straightforward and practical were the ones preferred by teachers. Practical here means providing information about both achievement and the next step, and able to be carried out within normal classroom activities. Assessment related to curriculum covered was therefore more likely to find favour. Salmon-Cox (1981) came to similar conclusions in her study of Pittsburgh elementary school teachers operating in a standardised test environment:

> While we discovered a great 'hunger' for diagnostic instruments among the teachers with whom we spoke, we did not find achievement tests used in this manner. Teachers desire diagnostic tests that are precise, closely matched to curricula and instruction, and timely. Achievement tests of the kind now widely used do not match these criteria. (p. 634)

The Saklofske and Janzen (1990) report of preferences amongst Canadian elementary and science teachers for their own teacher-made tests rather than standardised tests seems to reflect similar criteria being used.

Running records were respected by the teachers who used them because they were practical on all 3 counts identified by Salmon-Cox. They were likely to be done regularly for all children in the first 2 years, and those still on graded readers in the third year of school. BSM checkpoints were less likely to be done for every child: the factor which influenced this most seemed to be the time they took. An additional factor for some teachers working with children who had English as a second language was the language base of BSM, which they felt meant that the children's real understanding might be underestimated.

Work samples were analysed and corrected, and guidance was fed back to students both individually and as a group within normal class sessions. They were less likely to be included in individual folders than reading and mathematics levels, partly because teachers

felt they were unlikely to be used by their colleagues further up the school.

We asked the teachers in our study whether they felt they could teach as well without the particular set of assessment practices they were using. Half felt they could not teach as well without them. Some of their comments:

> I wouldn't be catering for their needs or taking them from where they're at.
> It can show you if you thought you had taught something, but few children were doing it.

> I couldn't teach as successfully without them, as they become new teaching points.

> [Running records] have taught me that I'm not pushing some children as fast or far enough. [Running records and checkpoints] allow you to think about a child in isolation, to show personal achievements you might otherwise not consider because they're in a group situation. It isolates problems they might be having with what they're doing.

> It makes you really conscious of what you're doing and what they're not doing, and what you can do next.

> They're really good at the beginning of the year, your starting point . . . Sometimes it's good to look back, if you've a concern with a child that you've just picked up, or they're not achieving as well as they could - not improving. You can look over the past, look at what happened last year, see if there's any patterns, or if it's something new . . . You forget - it can be quite a shock to see just how they have improved. It can actually be quite a rewarding experience because you're working with them each day, and you forget.

A quarter of the teachers had some reservations or ambivalence about the assessment practices they used. The chief of these was the time they took, time which was felt to eat into precious teaching time. Assessment was seen as a task additional to teaching for some of these teachers. The formal recording of assessment results, usually for someone else to hold or collate, was a concern for others. Some teachers felt that either the BSM checkpoints or their school's ongoing record of children's academic, personal, and social development were inappropriate, did not capture all that was worth knowing about the child, or could be used inappropriately.[33] The general concern not to prejudge a child, or enable a child to be treated in subsequent years by his or her behaviour or progress in one previous year was a factor in some of the teachers' ambivalence.

> The information we record we have to transcribe several times on to different cards. I think it's a waste of my time - I think I would be better off in my classroom. I think I probably could teach as well without it. But though I think I could keep the information quite easily in my head, could I retain it when it comes to writing reports? Because I want to make sure my information is as accurate as possible. Parents want to know what their children can and can't do, and I don't think you want to mislead them. Also, those records go with the child - other teachers look at them, and you don't want to misrepresent the child.

> Teachers are always consciously assessing and monitoring the children anyway, whether it's written down or in your head. I use the records when I'm writing reports. I'm quite happy with all the assessment we do. It's manageable, it's not too difficult to do, it's easy to store, and we can give it to the children in class time.

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[33] Brookhart (1991) notes and discusses the same uneasiness about potential uses of assessment results amongst teachers in her education measurement course in the United States, and hence a similar ambivalence about assessment practice which she argues is unhelpful for valid assessment. Her solution is that "grades [should be used] only for achievement related decisions . . . teachers [should] help the public interpret assessment results appropriately".(p. 36)

You can do thematic work without assessment, but running records are necessary. You need records in open plan teaching where children have different teachers.

I probably could teach without them, but [running records and BSM checkpoints] give you another time to refocus on the individual child, check how he or she is going . . . Assessment varies in its manageability - we haven't had reading for the last 2 days because we're doing assessment.

You could teach them as well, but could you evaluate and plan for the next thing? I think teachers with experience can, I know I can, I don't need to have my planning on paper. I can walk into a classroom and I can teach them for a week or two, or for a year, but would I be precisely meeting needs? I think I would, but I can't prove I've done it, and that's what we're going to have to do. We're going to have to prove we've done it, and we're going to be accountable.

A quarter of the teachers felt they could teach just as well without the assessments they used. Considerable teaching experience, with some overlap of a more "formal" curriculum approach, were factors related to this view, though they were not shared by all who felt able to manage without systematic or recorded assessment.

I can just sense where they should be by the way they read, the way they ask questions, the way they answer questions, how quickly they write things down.

After you've been teaching for a long time, you don't need all this. Often you haven't got time to look back over your notes anyway. I mean, when you've had a really flat out day, which we do here, you just don't have time to go back over these notes.

It's time-consuming. I think I could teach them as well, I don't think it all needs to be written down.

It should be said that while seasoned teachers were more likely to be satisfied with their own personal assessment, innovation, refinement, or more systematic organisation and use of assessment was not the sole province of the younger staff in our study. The 1990 survey report *The Impact of Tomorrow's Schools in Primary Schools and Intermediates*, also found no relation between teacher experience and negative views on assessment. It did find that teachers' estimates of the time expended on assessment increased with the increase in class size (Wylie 1991, p. 106).

Teachers' Views on Children's and Parents' Perceptions of Assessment

Most of the assessment which teachers did in the first 3 years of school could be done as part of classroom work, or a one-to-one session between child and teacher in the familiar environment of the junior school. Tests in the sense of a whole class activity done silently, by individuals, within a definite time limit, arrived in the third year, usually in the form of spelling or mathematical sums. Teachers were unaware of any general negative reaction by the children to the tests, though they noticed one or two who sometimes showed anxiety. One teacher in the school which had mid-year tests and an examination at the end of the year took this approach:

They have never had an exam, they've got them next week, and they are all asking what it is. I tell them not to look at anybody, and to work on their own, and not to talk to anyone, unless there is a question, when they're to come up to me. I make most of the day fairly light, so it can be a fun time. I try to keep it low key so that they are not worked up about it. Some worry at the drop of a hat; the pressure that's put on them [by parents].

We asked teachers whether children were aware of the ability groups they were in. Most thought most children were aware of the groups they were in, but that few children

equated their group with their worth or ability. Teachers were also careful to name the groups neutrally, for example, after different fruits or animals, rather than by ranked categories (such as A, B, C), and several said that they told children who wanted to be in groups further ahead than their own that they would be there with more time or effort. Individual incidents where high-achieving children had told others they were reading "baby" books or were not as "smart" as the teller were noted by 1 or 2 teachers. However, most teachers thought children saw themselves progressing through the groups as they grew "bigger" or had more school experience, and felt that the children did not take group membership as a summary judgment. Parents were often felt to be more aware of group membership than their children. Perhaps this was because group membership was one of the major indicators available for parents of their child's progress, and therefore assumes a prominence which can run counter to teachers' emphasis on the varying speed at which children progress in their first years at school, and their desire not to label children.

> Children get to know the groups after a while, who's on a higher level, who's not on a very high book. I don't make it very obvious. Probably parents are more concerned than children at this age.

> Children have the attitude that you have to go through stages, and some of the children are slightly younger, so they're still going through the stages they themselves have already been through. I haven't heard any horrible comments about 'you're slow' . . . children enjoy knowing that they are progressing - if I say 'You were doing this, and now look at what you're doing', they can see the difference, they know they're improving, and they remember.

> They feel that 'he's ahead of me, but I will get there eventually.' They don't ask me 'When am I going to be in that group?' They accept that people are at different stages - that one day it will be their turn, and they will get some people below them as well . . . I do have parents who want to know how close their child is to the top of the class: 'Don't get me wrong, I'm not pushing, but is he in the top group?' They put pressure on their children.

> The children get down the end of the school driveway, the mums are there, they whip out the journal cover, 'my son's reading this and it's red and your son's reading this and it's blue.'

Report writing was a black cloud hanging over the end of the year for many of the teachers. Evenings and weekends were allotted to distilling a brief summary of the year's progress from the assessment records of the year, with children's workbooks or samples to hand. Most aimed at 3 reports a night, usually taking an average of 45 minutes on them. Report writing was a distinct art form, with its own rules: it required teachers to tell the truth positively, in non-technical language. The positive tone derives from teacher and school experience that negative judgments rarely bring improvements in attitude, application, or achievement, and a concern that children or their parents do not decide early on that a child will be limited in his or her learning or achievements, and so close the door for good. It was also more likely for any concerns to be broached with parents earlier in the year, and orally.

> They take forever - every spare minute from now on is taken up with thinking what am I going to say about this child, that child. I didn't write any on Sunday - I knew this is what I wanted to say, but this is not the way I can say it. I knew if I wrote it, it would be 'didn't, doesn't, should', and that's just not how we write reports. . . . I don't think you could write anything on the last report that would carry through against the child, or come as a surprise - you couldn't suddenly say, 'Well I'm sorry, Mrs Higginbottom, but your son can't read for diddly'.

> Reports take AGES! We have to be positive though honest with any concerns or problems. Certain things can't be said in reports - for example, that the child still hasn't been taken to the doctor, and that's why he can't hear very well.

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You have to be pretty guarded with what you say at this level, because you don't want to label them. It's not what you are not allowed to say, but what's politic to say. Now I would not say what level a child is reading at, and I don't say what level they're working at in maths, because I know there are parents out there who are going to compare them. I try and make it personal, and I try to make it positive by starting with Johnny has, Johnny can or Johnny does, even if there is something 'negative' to say. . . . I've still got my school reports - and when you know parents are going to keep them, and they're going to become family documents, then you want them to be as truthful as you can, but put in the right way.

Teacher assessment and reporting practice was based on an open-ended view of potential, on the value of a diagnostic approach. Their frequently expressed concern in reporting to parents was that the criteria that parents used to assess their children's progress were summative, based on comparisons with other children: their older siblings, or neighbours' and friends' children. To the teachers in this study, such comparisons ignored the fine distinctions of age and its impact on actual classroom experience, differences in home support and resources, and the individuality of children, the different rates at which they "develop", or take in their classroom experience. Teachers had seen children rocket through the first year of school, and "plateau" out by their third year, achieving less then than other children who initially took longer to grasp the fundamental skills of reading, writing, or mathematical concepts. Teachers were concerned less with the rate of progress in the first 3 years than the continuing nature and solidity of that progress, as explored in the first section of this report.

Parents' Perceptions

New Entrant Level

Most of the 30 parents we interviewed when their children were 5 were satisfied with the progress their child had made in the first year. Their expectations of what their child should learn in the first year (or less) of school were mostly indefinite. Their assessment of progress seemed to be based on the evidence brought home in reading books and writing books or samples, or, if they made regular classroom visits or helped in the classroom, at the school. Additionally, they mentioned specific comments made by teachers in oral interviews.

I go in fairly frequently, so I keep tabs on what's happening. The parent interview is still useful, it's good to have a good 10 minutes. [The teacher] tells me which group she's in, where and when she's progressed. She's progressed wonderfully, got a wonderful teacher who's able to get the most out of each child. She's doing really well with reading, maths and maturity.

I don't really know what progress he's made. His writing is coming on.

I'd like to know how his writing is getting on actually, I don't know the age when they start writing.

He brings home his homework book with teacher comments, she makes comments about his progress. He shows us a star or smiley face that he gets on his printing, or a comment on his printing from the teacher. He's doing well. He could do alphabet and counting before he went to school, and now he's reading, which is what I wanted.

She wasn't doing very well with her reading, so [the teacher] put her back on to simpler books. She wasn't happy about that. . . . She enjoys being at school, she's really very happy, and we're happy to see how she's going. . . . We're definitely pleased with her progress. She knows her numbers, she can count up quite high, she knows all the alphabet. Even her reading she's doing really well now.

We're not sure what sort of progress she should have made. It's hard to have a benchmark. She

seems to be doing perfectly well, to be competent. . . . I've noticed one child in particular who she sees from time to time who seemed to be further ahead in terms of her writing ability than Emma was, writing stories herself. And the parents of the child made comments on it. I think there are children who are progressing more quickly than Emma - but all the ones we can compare with are going to read perfectly well and reach a particular level. Whether one will reach a level six months ahead of the others, who knows, they're all going to be perfectly competent.

They had the parent interviews soon after he started, so I left it then. But I made a time to see the teacher, and she said he was getting on very well, knows so many words, and so on.

There were also a few parents who felt they needed more information on their children's progress. Most of these had children who started school after the midyear parent-teacher interviews. Two parents felt their children were not making the progress they should.

I've spoken to the teacher twice. Mrs Brent said she didn't know her very well because she'd just started. I think she's improving a lot now, she talks to people now. I haven't had an interview with the teacher because she started in June, and they had interviews right after. I wouldn't mind having one to find out how she is progressing at school.

I haven't noticed any progress. He used to bring words home from school at his other school.

I'm reasonably satisfied with Leanne's progress at school, I tend to think that's something the school will monitor as she goes along, and keep me informed about what's happening. . . . I've spoken to the teacher before and after school, I've got a reasonable idea - no, I suppose I don't really know exactly how she's getting on, I think I probably would like to know more.

The 7 parents who had had written reports at the time of interview were pleased with them, with 1 exception.

Susan had made a lot of positive comments, and had tried to find ways of indicating where Kerry wasn't doing so well by putting it in a positive way.

I'm satisfied with the progress she's made . . . the teacher leaves a note in her reading folder with comments on her progress, and I can keep a check that way. . . . The written report from the school was not helpful. I'm not sure how it could be improved.

Only 1 parent made a general comment about the assessment methods used in their child's school.

I'd like to have a bit more information about the testing. How they do the testing right at the beginning of the year and obviously at points during the year, and the end of the year.

Second Year

We spoke with 40 parents[34] of the children in their second year of school. Again, the parents' picture of their children's progress came from a blend of:

- the work their children brought home or did at home;
- teacher comments on workbooks going home, at interviews, informally if the parent took in or picked up their child from the classroom, and in written reports;
- comparisons with other children, peers, or siblings;
- the groups their children were in; and
- memories of their own schooling.

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[34] This includes parents of some children who moved out of the study schools in their third year of school.

Parents' assessment of their children's progress reflected their own quite different experiences, and, in some cases, values. It was easier for them to see progress in reading and writing than in mathematics, partly because of the marked changes in teaching mathematics since their own schooldays, and the emphasis on activity rather than written work in the BSM programme, which means that there is less evidence of progress coming home.

It is interesting, however, that group membership was not as emphasised in parents' responses as its prominence in teachers' views of parent perceptions would suggest. This may be because the parents of second-year children in our study were generally content with the standard of their children's work.

> Anna Walls has been good at showing us examples of her work and explaining where she's at in the interview. It's a standard interview - how she is progressing, how she gets on with others, whether she is happy. We talk to the teacher from time to time outside the interviews . . . we assume that the school would tell us if there was any difficulty. We don't have a clear conception of where she should be, especially in maths. We did ask specifically about that at the parent interview, and accepted the teacher's judgment that she was doing fine. . . . Emma can write neatly, but she usually chooses not to. It's interesting to compare her with a friend at a private school who writes neatly, but there the attention is paid to form, not content.

> We only know his progress in reading because he brings reading home. He has improved with reading, I can't tell with maths.

> It's good that he brings books home, otherwise I wouldn't know he was really reading. The first-term parent-teacher interview was good, they said he had been picking up things. He misses out some of his words, and uses others in the wrong place, and I correct him. I don't know about maths because it's done at school.

> She's bored, she's streaking ahead, moving at a pace that's quite hard for the education system to keep up with.

> Last year's report was helpful, it reassured me that he was all right socially. I liked it about the report that it talked about the weaker points that he's trying to build up. The teacher pointed out to me letters that Shane was doing wrong, and I could do them with him, show him how to do them. . . . I'm really quite happy with his schooling and the progress he's making. He can read quite well now. I don't think they really do much maths at this age.

> I felt there was at least as much information on how he coped socially in the class as on how he was achieving in his work, and that was quite good.

> Things are well explained at the meet-the-teacher evening, they point out problem areas, you know what to check on. We can see how she's going by the ticks in her book.

A quarter of the parents made comments on their schools' assessment practices, mainly calling for more monitoring, or more information to be given to parents:

> They've got several methods of keeping records on a daily basis - I know they have running records in reading, but I don't know how they keep records of other things. Really, they don't communicate enough with the parents. It means that the parents can't support the school in what they're trying to do because they don't know what's happening, and the school doesn't know what's happening at home.

> From the half-yearly interview and from her reading we know she is progressing. I would like to see a syllabus that parents could follow up. In my schooldays you didn't have any interviews unless the parent was called up, but you got a written report card with marks in each subject. I would like a mixture of both systems.

> The work is good as far as it goes, but her teachers appear not to be monitoring her reading as closely as they might. Sometimes she brings home the same book for 4 nights, where 2 nights is enough, she's only consolidating work already done. . . . I did teach her the times table, because I felt she was ready for it, she wasn't being extended in maths, and she had started recognising patterns.

Third Year

In the third year of school we interviewed the parents of 32 children. Half the parents mentioned the groups their children were in, most often for reading or mathematics. None were aware of any dissatisfaction their children had with their groups, and felt that although some children were aware of differences in achievement levels most of these were competitive about them.

> Occasionally she might say 'I think it's the top reading group' but it's not of great importance to her.

> He knows he's in the highest maths group. He's very aware of that. He also seems to be aware of the highest and the lowest. There's not supposed to be any.

Half the parents mentioned stickers, stamps, or some sort of tangible award system. Most of these parents saw them as signs of positive reinforcement, for helping (exhibiting social skills), as well as for school work, and were happy with these uses.

Homework was most frequently reading and spelling, although many of the better readers no longer brought home readers from school. Mathematics work was mentioned by only 3 parents as something the children brought home occasionally to do and several parents said that they would like to see more:

> I'd like to see that she brought perhaps maths as well as the spelling. I'd quite like to see both. I always think it's good that children come home and share a bit of school work with us. I'm sure there are a probably a lot of parents who wouldn't have a clue what their children are doing at school.

A few children brought occasional project work or work sheets home and in 1 school there was regular homework besides spelling and reading. Other completed work such as stories, art work, or books would come home when finished, or at the end of the term. One child cleared out his desk each week and this was a good gauge of progress. One parent commented that he would like to see more work come home as a help in assessing progress. Another said:

> I'd like to know a wee bit more about what he's actually doing, hear about the projects, more homework to see how they're doing. He hasn't had a lot of maths, I don't know how he's doing. I know he's coping with reading and writing because he brings that home.

Parents helped in a variety of ways, in reading, listening, asking about the story, breaking words down, or checking spelling after their children had learnt it.

Parents received other feedback in the form of oral and written reports. Several parents mentioned visiting the classroom but this seemed a less common occurrence as the children got older. A few parents said they would like more reporting - as 1 pointed out, with the half-year interview a problem could go 5 months before being picked up. Only 2 mentioned specific details they would like, such as the reading age. Report comments on social skills and attitude to work were appreciated.

A quarter of the parents made some comparison, usually with other siblings or children at other schools. "Publishing" children's work in the classroom gave 1 parent her basis of comparison with other children in the class.

My daughter was far more advanced at reading than Oliver is but I don't know that her comprehension was always as good.

I'd been over with a friend that's got a little boy the same age as Sally and I felt that what he was doing was much more advanced. His stories and things like that and his spelling and everything. The teachers said that we shouldn't be comparing her to other children in other things.

Most parents were appreciative of a more varied learning environment than their own had been.

I was brought up under 'you do this right, if you don't you're naughty', whereas they're being brought up - you do this. If you can you do the best you can. It's a completely different style which I think is lovely. I didn't have any trouble in the old system, but I saw kids having trouble - one of my best friends, she and I were probably on a par intellectually.

Those who had some teaching background, who had older children who had been through the system, or who were informed through school meetings or dropping in at the school were more likely to be better informed about school assessment methods than others. One father suggested that it would be very useful for parents of his age [40ish] to be given a background briefing on the "new maths" and how it differed from the mathematics he learned. Most parents did not know whether children were assessed relative to other children, or in terms of their own progress. Some parents' understanding of the assessment practices at the school were mistaken, which suggests a need for better communication between school and parents. Some of those who were satisfied said they hadn't bothered to find out the specifics and presumed they would be told if there were problems.

Well for reading, say like if they're reading the red book they've got to have 100 percent accuracy before they actually progress to the next group.

I have often wondered what they base progress on. I suppose they give them tests and things but I'm sure if there's any problem, if he wasn't keeping up, the teachers would tell me.

By watching Suzanne for about half an hour one morning writing I have a much better idea of what writing is about and the importance of the flow of writing rather than getting everything correct. I don't want more bits of paper.

They had a lovely night in the middle term when they got parents down and they went through a typical writing session and how they model and get ideas and they got parents writing and parents found it really hard!

Children's Perceptions

The descriptions below aim to isolate the clues that children were using to tell us in their individual interviews -

- whether they were good at reading, writing, and mathematics; and
- how they knew they were good (or not good, according to their answer).

New Entrant Level

Most of the children thought they were good at reading and mathematics. They knew this, either because the teacher told them "good work", or gave them a tick, sticker, or stamp, or because they could do the work they were given. In reading, they could read a lot, or big books. In mathematics, they were more likely to give an answer relating to the

activities given: they could do them all, or they could do different kinds. Most children were vague about their writing achievement. Only 2 children said they were good at reading because their parents (as well as teacher) had told them they were, and the groups they were in were also only mentioned by 2 children.

> [I'm good at reading] because I can guess the words . . . [I'm good at maths] because I can do a lot of things.
>
> I'm good at writing stories because I just sound out, and if I'm right, then the teacher doesn't cross it out.
>
> [I'm good at reading] because I can read any book except hard books.
>
> I'm good at printing because I get a stamp.
>
> [I'm good at reading] because I'm reading a lot of the time . . . [I'm good at maths] because I learn a lot of things.

A quarter of the children did not give clear answers, or expressed doubt that they were good at something. The reasons they gave related to the difficulty they found doing something, or the awareness that what they could do was limited. Two of the children mentioned their group in relation to their perception.

> I can't read yet, but others in my group can, and I've been in school longer.
>
> I went back, I went back to the orange books, like these ones . . .
>
> I'm not really good at reading because there are some books I can't read.
>
> I hate writing because I'm always doing mistakes and sometimes I do a mistake and I've rubbed it out.

Second Year

The first-year pattern continued in first-term interviews with the children, with less emphasis on teacher feedback through stickers and stamps, and some more specific reasons given, such as "because I know more words now", "I can do W", or, for a girl who was writing well, "I'm not very good because this morning I got lots of words wrong". One girl said she was good at reading and mathematics because it was fun. Several children thought they were good at mathematics because they knew how to get out and set up the "games".

Third-term interviews again had less mention of teacher feedback, and more reasons relating to ease of work, amount of work, such as number of words, or in some cases, length of story. Children doing well in mathematics mentioned specifics such as "take-aways", and counting to 100. There was slightly more awareness of the group a child was in relative to other groups, but children in groups at lower levels than others did not seem to necessarily take their group level as their personal ability. Some children wanted to do the mathematics activities others were doing because they looked more exciting. Only 4 children mentioned tests in their answers to our question; 3 mentioned spelling tests, and 1 child recalled tests in 3 subject areas.

> Because I can usually read the story.
>
> [Maths] is fun, I like doing it, I do it a lot, and sometimes I practise at home.

Because I read at school.

I'm all right. Because I can't read up with the Lions.

I don't think I am good at writing, because I can't do stops.

Because Mum tests me on sums and subsets. She's a teacher as well. I'm in the highest group you can get and the hardest. But they're easy. I want a higher group, I want to go into the next class.

Because if I get [maths exercises] all right, I get an excellent, and that means 3 stamps.

Cause I can see when I write in my book.

Cause I know how to spell every word I write about.

Because sometimes I write about this much stories [shows length of current story].

I'm quite good [at writing] because when the teacher marks it, there are not that many mistakes in it . . . [I'm good at maths] because when Mrs Hepworth did a test on me, she said it was too easy.

The children were also asked what they were best and worst at in classroom activity. A variety of subject areas and activities were mentioned, with no clear preference. Individual children's judgment of their best and worst bore no clear relation to their actual achievement levels, as gauged by reading and mathematics levels, and teacher comments in progress folders.

Third Year

All except 5 children said they were good at reading. The most common reason given for their evaluation was the evaluation of other people: the opinion of teachers, family, or friends:

Because I had a test with Mrs Black again and she said good and my friend said you're good at reading.

Other reasons were quite specific, relating to factors such as speed, number of books read, difficulty of books read, correctness, and group membership or class place:

I'm the fourth to best reader in the class. . . . I see them reading harder books.

The few who felt they weren't good at reading again related it to specific reasons.

Because I can't read the hard books.

And diagnosing what they considered would be helpful:

A lot more spelling tests what I hate and more sounding out letters - I never do that.

The children were asked how the teacher knew what they were like at reading. Several were conscious that the teacher assessed their work by writing things down.

When I read she just does those ticks what I get right and she has to write the words what I don't get right.

Some said that the teacher just listened, and 1 was aware of the part of comprehension.

'Cause we do a part at reading and in the end she says things like what happened in the story and we have to go back and tell her the story.

Over half the children felt they were good at writing, with the most frequent reason being length of stories, the ability to write correct words, or others' opinions. Several said they were not good at writing, and some of these were able to pinpoint specifically why:

Because sometimes I don't know whether it's a 'c' or a 'k'.

Most pupils were aware that the teacher did more than simply read their work, that writing assessment was done by teacher evaluation (ticks, writing in a book, marking of stories). Teacher/pupil assessment through conferencing was also mentioned, and a degree of self-evaluation was present in several cases:

Usually we have this planning sheet which says 'Write, revise, proofread, publish' and you put it in the editing box and she reads through.

Two-thirds felt they were good at mathematics. The main reason was that they got it "right". Some also relied on teacher feedback.

Once Mrs Solway said I am a true blue mathematician.

Interestingly, none mentioned their friends or family as sources for their judgment on their mathematics achievement, in contrast to their use to judge reading.

Several other minor reasons given included the fact that they could do hard work, pluses, or were in the highest group. One girl in the top group said it was a good group because:

There are more girls than boys because most of the boys aren't good at maths so they're in the Rhinos.

Several children felt they were not good or not that good at mathematics because they could not do some of the activities: "because I get the times tables wrong", or because they had no feedback from the teacher.

Children felt the teacher knew what they were like at mathematics mainly by the teacher's marking.

Because she ticks our work.

When asked what they were good/best at, children had a variety of responses. Several children mentioned writing and mathematics; although non-subject areas such as "not fidgeting" and "drawing on the wall" also rated mention.

Because when Mummy went to get my report the teacher said I did good reading and writing.

[I'm good at maths] because I get everything about right.

'Cause I know all the pluses and she ticks them.

[I'm good at writing] because my teacher keeps on saying 'Your stories keep on being neat'.

'Cause I've done a whole work sheet with hard maths, though I had a bit of trouble with that one.

I'm not really [good at writing] because I hate writing.

Because at home I can read *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe*, and it's a hard book for some people at my school . . . I used not to be [good at maths] but now I am. Well, one day I got it right. I get sums right.

Because I read heaps of books at home and I've got journals as well . . . [I'm good at writing] because I do harder words.

Because I've read this book and it has small letters in it, and I can read them.

Cause Mrs Young said my printing is improving.

I'm good at writing because I can spell everything, but not, um, not the large ones.

I'm good in Mrs Sage's group because she doesn't shout as much as Mrs Lorne.

[I'm not good at reading] cause when I make mistakes Mrs Mclean says 'No'.

Over two-thirds of the children mentioned tests, mainly spelling or mathematics. Most enjoyed tests because they were learning or got them "right".

I usually get 5 out of 5.

The tests the children knew were short spelling or mathematical ones, without any penalties for wrong answers. They liked the immediate feedback, the recognition they gained for themselves or their team in the form of stars and the like. Tests were an event in the life of the classroom: they could be fun.

If you get 5 out of 5 in the Friday spelling test, you get 4 jellybeans, but they've run out. For 2 whole weeks she's run out. Lots of people will be getting 8 (jellybeans).

I like the tests on pluses; I don't like spelling tests, sometimes I get them wrong.

I like maths tests so I know how good I am.

I don't like the maths tests because they're harder than the spelling ones.

[In spelling tests] when you get 6 out of 6 you get a point for your team. I like speed tests because sometimes we get them wrong and it doesn't matter 'cause you [still] get a point for your team.

7 ASSESSMENT PRACTICES IN THE LIGHT OF CURRICULUM GUIDELINES

We looked at the then current syllabuses for different subjects for the first 3 years of school to see how well their suggestions for assessment were matched by the assessment practices reported in the classes in our study. In general, the practices were in line with the syllabuses, which give guidelines and principles rather than recipes.

Reading

As noted earlier, reading assessment practices closely matched the guidelines and tools in the curriculum frameworks they had been drawn from. Teachers were using the information they had from their records to identify children having difficulty learning to read, and aimed to have them reading, albeit not as fluently as others, by the end of their first 3 years of school.

Writing

Guidelines on writing were divided between "writing" and "handwriting" at the time of our study.[35] The material on writing focused on the ability of children to "write in ways suitable to the various occasions on which they will want or need to write". (Department of Education 1975, p. 3). Both originality and accuracy were singled out, in a context of enhancing pupils' ability to judge their own work and that of others by "the light of its intention" (ibid.). The curriculum guidelines gave goals which match the practice of the teachers in this study, but they also warned against any specific overall goals:[36]

> In the primer classes, most children will learn to write several simple, consecutive sentences correctly, and to use capital letters and full stops. Most children will go well beyond this; but it is not possible to say what children should be able to do in any detail, because individual patterns of development and home circumstances have so much bearing on achievement that any arbitrary standard could be misleading. The standard to set is simply the best that each child can achieve with all the help the teacher can give. (p. 6)

Handwriting

The 1985 handwriting supplement to the syllabus, which gave 5 criteria to use in evaluating handwriting, says:

> Sensitive and informed observation of each child at work is the most useful way for the teacher to evaluate handwriting . . . when children have made even minor improvements in their handwriting, positive comments will encourage them to improve yet further. (p. 20)

It also commended children's assessment of their own work, emphasising comparison

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[35] A very attractive guide for teachers based on the principles of process writing, *Dancing with the Pen*, paralleling the clear and useful *Reading in Junior Classes* resource has recently been published and distributed to all state schools by Learning Media, Ministry of Education; both books would also be very useful resources for parents.

[36] David Philips (1991) notes that set attainment targets in writing, including handwriting, could be counterproductive to improving children's writing because of the wide variability amongst children, and the different paths that seem to suit different children.

with model examples, and teacher discussion of "errors and how to correct them with an individual child, or by discussing common errors with a group" (p. 20). Again this was the common practice in the classes in our study.

Spelling

Guidelines on spelling emphasised the mastery of words children use in "everyday writing", the ability to use a dictionary to check spelling, and above all:

> . . . each child should become critical of his [sic] own spelling at all times: in other words, that he should develop a 'spelling conscience'. (Department of Education 1975, p. 4)

Mathematics

The mathematics syllabus (Department of Education, 1985) sets out objectives to be aimed at over 2-year periods in the primary school, and gives this advice on assessment (which it also terms evaluation):

> Each aspect (of the syllabus) needs to be evaluated, since success in one does not necessarily indicate growth in all-round mathematical ability.
>
> To obtain an overall picture of children's attitudes and achievement, teachers should assess performance in a variety of ways. Observation of the children at work, and informal discussion with them, are appropriate for assessing work habits, confidence, ability to think sequentially and to communicate, and speed in performing certain processes. Structured interviews with individuals or small groups give direct insight into strengths and weaknesses that might not be gained in any other way. Written tests, too, have some advantages, particularly with larger groups of older children, but the questions need to be carefully framed, and directed at specific learning objectives. Diagnostic tests, prepared by the teacher or published by reputable authorities, are often useful for identifying particular difficulties. Similarly, standardised tests given at set intervals can indicate a child's achievement relative to past performance and the performance of other children in the same class or age group.
>
> Regular evaluation of children's attitudes towards mathematics is particularly important, since attitudes are often the key to success and satisfaction in learning the subject.
>
> Indications of positive or negative feelings may be gauged by conducting informal discussions with the children and by observing their degree of enthusiasm for mathematical activities. Voluntary play with mathematical games and puzzles, use of the mathematics table, or reading books on the subject are also indicators of progress (pp. 11-12).

The assessment practices of the teachers in this study were certainly along the lines suggested here, with, perhaps, the exception of the standardised tests. BSM checkpoints provided the evidence of pupil progress which this syllabus guideline saw as a use of such tests, and allowed comparison with others. However, unlike the use by several schools of the results of the 6-Year Reading Net in language, no school was using 1 year's results on the checkpoints to refine the programme for those coming on, or to plot evidence of improved school achievement by such programme-diagnostic attention.

Science

The advice on evaluation in the 1984 science syllabus emphasises a comparison of clearly set unit objectives with "information . . . about the children's level of mastery of the more important cognitive objectives and development of attitudes" (p. 46). It suggests planned oral questioning, informal observation using "simple clues such as facial expression, tone of voice and concentration" (p. 46), and notes that check lists and rating scales could be used to record observations. From discussions with children may be gained benefits such as information about children's thinking modes, "information that cannot be obtained from

traditional tests". It warns, however, that:

> Discussions are time consuming and even when carefully constructed allow only for a sampling of objectives with a limited number of pupils. They may favour verbally fluent children and information gathered by this method should be supplemented with information gathered by other techniques. (p. 47)

The same warning is given for written tests.

Social Studies

The 1991 reprint of the 1981 social studies syllabus comes without guidelines for evaluation/assessment. It seems fair to say that assessment of thematic or unit work in science and social studies was largely unsystematic in the junior classes in this study. Few of the teachers consistently set objectives for each unit, and then gathered the information which would allow full evaluation at the end of the unit. To do so would require more time devoted to planning and assessment: and time was the one resource which all teachers felt they were short of. Even if suitable and acceptable curriculum and assessment resources were developed by people outside schools, the advice contained in the curriculum statements and guides would suggest that reliable assessment in these fields could only be done by devoting more classroom time to the actual assessment.

8 TOO MUCH, TOO LITTLE, JUST RIGHT?

In this concluding section, we look at the assessment practices and perceptions reported here in the light of other relevant research, and advance some thoughts as to the lessons we can learn from this material.

How does one assess assessment? The question is unavoidable in the present climate of interest in assessment. To put the practices charted here against what research has uncovered about the nature and usefulness of assessment is a chastening journey for anyone looking for certainties, or perfect solutions.

First, the assessment practices described here are in line with the good practice identified by research on what works most effectively to improve learning, in relation to the particular curriculum and social goals held for children. From recent writings on motivation (Dweck 1989), and the impact of assessment on student motivation, learning strategies, and achievement (Crooks 1989), one learns of the importance of assessment which diagnoses, which analyses and provides feedback on cognitive processes as well as product, and which encourages effort and attempt. The diagnostic, or formative, aim is certainly alive in much of the assessment found in the junior school classrooms in this study, as is the grasp of the importance of internalising motivation, developing a motivation based on a willingness to try and therefore, risk, and respond to, failure.

Most of the assessment is focused on individual learners as individuals. Few schools were providing or analysing data on a classroom or age basis to provide another perspective on their curriculum aims or teaching practices. There are perils in doing so without a full understanding of what can and cannot be generalised from such findings, and in ensuring that the results serve the curriculum aims rather than gearing the curriculum to serve what could turn out to be unreliable or inappropriate methods of assessment. In this respect, the development under the Achievement Initiative of curriculum-linked assessment resource banks from which teachers can choose items appropriate to their own curriculum emphasis is to be commended, and should provide a useful tool for classroom and school self-appraisal.

What most of the assessment practices found in the junior school classrooms in this study have in common is that they fit with the curriculum emphasis and curriculum resources, teaching methods, such as the common grouping of children by achievement levels, and teaching philosophies. They can often be done within the ordinary flow of the classroom activities. Professional judgment as to frequency, and, sometimes, form, can be exercised. They are relatively "user-friendly", without being mechanical exercises.

The next question which arises then is the reliability of the practices. From recent research and analysis of what actually happens in classrooms, including the new English national assessment tasks and the seemingly uniform standardised tests of the United States (BERA Policy Task Group on Assessment 1991, Broadfoot *et al.* 1991, Torrance 1991, Wodtke *et al.* 1989), one learns that what looks like the same assessment tool can in fact operate differently in different classrooms, producing different results for children who might, if all evaluated together, seem very similar in competence and/or product. While repeating the same assessment with each child makes it reasonably reliable for that child, the differences between classrooms and schools still make interclass and interschool comparisons unreliable.

There are 3 major concerns which arise from these research findings. First, any national system of assessment, such as the recently piloted British system, runs the risk of making comparisons between both children and schools which are in fact unreliable. It is impossible to combine diagnostic and summary assessments in the same instrument without undermining 1 of the 2 aims. This is discussed in much of the literature cited in this section, and recognised in the separation of national monitoring and individual student assessment in the Achievement Initiative.

Second, do the currently de facto national assessment methods of running records in reading, the 6-Year Reading Net, and BSM checkpoints operate differently in different classrooms also, producing apparently objective results that may in fact be less comparable than they seem on the surface? A study of Reading Recovery (Glynn *et al.* 1989) found

> . . . a substantial number of cases in which children seemed to be incorrectly placed in their classroom reading programmes. By no means all of these were target children after discontinuation. (p. 130)

These were children for whom running records were being done on a regular basis. The researchers' concern was that despite the seeming "objectivity" of the assessment methods, and the diagnostic intentions, children could miss out on the learning opportunities they needed in order to make or consolidate progress. The authors recommended more careful monitoring. But it may be that it is the assessment tools themselves which need monitoring. The spelling subtest of the 6-Year Reading Net, for example, may not be appropriate to the assessment of the achievement levels of those exposed to different methods of teaching writing.

Third, the public policy environment centred around decentralisation and school-self-management puts a strong emphasis on accountability, and performance indicators at school level. If the Education Review Office, which is charged with monitoring schools, does not use the curriculum-linked items presently being developed for the Achievement Initiative, then problems could arise if the measures it uses are unreliable, or irrelevant to curriculum goals.

From the cumulative analysis of the match between the aims of assessment tools and what they actually measure, or describe, one learns that many fall short, and may mislead, or limit what could be achieved (Broadfoot 1991, Raven 1991, Willis 1990, and, for the BSM checkpoints, Irwin 1990 and Young-Loveridge 1991a and 1991b). Increasing assessment is counterproductive if it does not shed better light on the more complex knowledge and competencies which many people are demanding. We do not necessarily agree with the child who says she is good at reading because she is reading more words.

One wonders also whether a re-norming of the stanines and reading ages used for running records and prose inventories would mean an upping of the ante in what is required of children to get the same "age". This happened between the 1955 and 1974 Burt reading tests (Croft 1980). To put this another way, will our expectations of what children can achieve rise, and yet appear to be matched to an identical yardstick? Such a trend is well documented in IQ assessment over the last 30 or so years (Flynn 1987). This means, amongst other things, that comparisons across time are no longer of the same thing.

There are several lessons which could be learnt from the material reported here in relation to current policy initiatives. As far as the Achievement Initiative is concerned, it would seem desirable to design assessment methods which junior school teachers find "user-friendly" as well as useful, so that they stand the best possible chance of being

readily implemented and used to enhance the learning opportunities available to children. Our conclusion is that such methods should be practical, not too time-consuming to carry out or record, directly relevant to the existing curricula and classroom work with individual children, able to be readily incorporated into classroom programmes and organisation, and able to some extent to be "customised" by classroom teachers. The latter trait also fits well with the increased emphasis in educational administration on decentralisation and school self-management.

The second is the discovery that some teachers were using inappropriate tests, such as those normed on a higher age group, or designed for a different purpose other than the one to which they were being put. Some teachers had not gone through the registration process required to use the particular tests they were using. Developers of assessment tools and researchers have been worried about the gap between the technical aspects of their craft and teachers' appreciation of the reasons for and importance of these aspects, so that they can choose tests which are appropriate for their own ends (e.g., Gullickson 1984). Renwick and Vize's (1991) study of teacher trainees indicates that while trainees were perhaps learning more about assessment techniques than the reasons for assessment, more coverage of both might be advantageous (p.108). It would be very useful to undertake further research on what inservice assessment training is available, and on its effectiveness.

Reporting to parents has received new emphasis in the Tomorrow's Schools environment. The teachers and parents in our study sometimes saw different evidence on children's progress, sometimes put the evidence into different contexts to make sense of it, or misread each other's information requirements. Some bridging of the gaps would seem highly desirable. Some of the schools in our study were already working to give parents a clear picture of what happens in their child's classroom, and why. Some similar work on individual children's progress and achievements might also be highly desirable, particularly where the parent could play a complementary role in providing support or extension. It is not an easy job; but it needs to be done, and done with the care and imagination which so many of the teachers in our study were bringing to their work with children in the classroom.

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APPENDIX 1 - DESCRIPTION OF THE STUDY SCHOOLS

The descriptions are based on material from the interviews with teachers. In 1990, a report on progress and early findings was sent to the schools. This contained descriptions of the sample schools. Schools were asked to correct anything they felt was inaccurate and to make any alterations to the description of their own school that they wished. Two schools made alterations and the following descriptions incorporate these.

School A

This is a small school with a high Maori roll. The catchment area is small and local. A few children come from wealthy or professional backgrounds but many do not. The school has developed a strong and comprehensive philosophy on learning, over a period of several years. The teachers work hard to create a child-centred environment where children are encouraged to assume a high degree of self-responsibility. The teachers aim to guide children into successful learning situations rather than to over-direct them. The junior classrooms in the junior school are single cell and a full Reading Recovery programme is in operation.

School B

This is a large school. The social backgrounds of the children are divided, more or less, into 2 distinct groups. There are many families whose income is derived from shift work, manual labour, or benefits, such as the domestic purposes or unemployment benefits. But there is an increasing number of more affluent Pakeha families who have bought up much of the area's cheap housing. There has a been a growing conflict between the most recent arrivals in the area and the more long-standing residents who do not have the same financial means. The latter have begun to resent the intrusion of the newcomers into their community.

The school's largest ethnic groups are Maori, Samoan, and Pakeha, although there are growing numbers of Tongan, Kampuchean, Vietnamese, Chinese, and Indian children. There is a Maori language unit on site which is largely autonomous. The playground is a good size and the attractive school library reflects the diverse ethnicity of the school population. The junior school classrooms are single cell, although some of the larger rooms are used for more variable activities.

The staff have a strong commitment to promoting anti-racist attitudes among the children. They aim to encourage children to achieve their own potential. As the Assistant Principal told us, their "best is *our* best". The staff also encourage a family atmosphere at the school. This is not a Pakeha nuclear family model, but one that extends across a wide range of interpretations of "family".

School C

This school is an inner city, full primary school with a large transient population. The geographical catchment area extends across the greater Wellington area and to areas such

as Porirua. The immediate catchment area has a divergent ethnic and socioeconomic-economic population with a small group of affluent families and a large number of indigent refugee families from South East Asia, single parent families and university students living in shared accommodation. Fifty-one percent of families at the school come under categories 5 and 6 of the Elley-Irving Index or are classified either as students or beneficiaries.

The families represented at the school include Pacific Island (predominantly Samoan), Maori, Indian, Pakeha and South-East Asian. Thirty percent of enrolled pupils speak English as a second language. The physical space at the school is considered by junior school teachers to be adequate and although there is no grass area on the school grounds, there is a large grass field next to the school which is often used. The new entrant classroom is open plan and contains children up to Standard One level. Two teachers are teamed to work in this classroom.

The school has a very strong commitment and policy for functional mainstreaming for the school's special educational needs children. There is strong evidence of this as the new entrant classroom where the teachers all have appropriate training and one teacher is a fluent speaker of sign language.

School D

This school is situated in a seaside suburb in an established residential area. The immediate catchment area is an affluent professional neighbourhood with a largely Pakeha population. The families represented at the school include (predominantly) Pakeha, and smaller numbers of French, German, Cambodian, Chinese, Indian, and Samoan. Nine percent of the roll is identified as Maori. The school roll is stable. The physical space at the school is considered to be good by the junior school teachers. The play areas are attractively designed and the library is well stocked.

The junior school is open plan, although there are closed-off home areas attached to the central room. There are 5 staff in the junior school. Each of these teachers fulfils a function for the 1:20 staff allocation and they are assisted in a variety of activities by a comprehensive timetabled system of parent helpers.

Promotion of junior pupils is decided on their progress and social development but this can be accelerated if numbers increase rapidly. ESL children and/or slow developers can be retained in the new entrant group a little longer if this is in their interest. The school has always ensured that the basic curriculum is competently presented to all children. A careful monitoring of pupil progress throughout the school in basic subjects is maintained. The teachers believe that children should also develop to their best cultural and social potential.

School E

This is an integrated Catholic school. The children come from a wide range of backgrounds and the junior classes include Filipino, Maori, Samoan, Dutch, Yugoslav, Greek, and Italian children. The new entrant classroom is a well-resourced and attractive single cell area. There is a well-equipped library and a strong commitment from the staff to keep it well stocked and up to date. There is a Reading Recovery programme in operation. The 1:20 staffing allocation is used for Reading Recovery and one-to-one literacy-orientated learning.

The school's philosophy incorporates elements of religious observance; the Holy Communion is an important aspect of school life. Religious instruction is given and children are encouraged to question and debate as part of their learning.

School F

This is a private, full primary, Anglican school with an attached preschool. It is in a city location but draws its pupils from a broad catchment area. The parents come from a wide range of social backgrounds. The classes include Greek, Samoan, Indian, and Chinese children. The school is well equipped. There are specialist teachers for music and for physical education, and for French in higher classes. The school day starts with assembly, including religious observance. A few 4-year-olds may be enrolled in the new entrant class.

Phonics are included in the reading programme, with regular homework, and there is some use of computers for mathematics and publishing. Independent learning, and sharing with others, are important elements of the junior school programme. The school has an English preparatory school atmosphere and the programme is more formal than in state schools.

School G

This full primary school is situated in a relatively affluent and growing area, with little unemployment. Most of the children are Pakeha. In 1989 the total roll was 414, and still growing. The school is well resourced. In June 1990 there were 225 children (approximately) in the junior school which is organised into 2 syndicates:

(1) Standards 1, 2, and 3 (3 classes)
(2) J1 and 2 (4 classes)

There is a senior teacher in charge of each syndicate and the Assistant Principal has overview of both. Children are in single cell classrooms and there is cross grouping for reading and mathematics. The school has part 1:20 allocation, i.e., 1 teacher. This is used for Reading Recovery and a comprehensive language programme in the J1 and 2 syndicate.

Programmes of work reflect a balanced approach across the curriculum with a firmer commitment to reading, writing, and mathematics. There is an emphasis on developing independent learning and promoting self-esteem. A daily circle time encourages the children to talk about themselves, their feelings, and their behaviour towards others.

School H

In this school most of the children come from a low socioeconomic background and the junior classes include Samoan, Maori, Indian, Malaysian, Greek, and Pakeha children. The school has a stable roll. The catchment area is not entirely local; some children come from suburbs close by. The junior school is a combination of open plan and single cell classrooms used as a "variable" teaching space. This is largely due to the unusual design of the building, which has a number of nooks and crannies, staircases, and oddly placed rooms that can make teaching difficult. The school is soundproofed because of its proximity to an industrial area with high noise levels. This has caused some ventilation problems so that, at times, the classrooms feel overheated. The playground is very large, open, and grassed. The library is attractive and well stocked.

The staff have spent a great deal of time discussing and developing a teaching philosophy, and some strong commitments have subsequently emerged. The teachers believe that children have the right to develop at their own rate; that the individual needs of every child will be met (despite the lack of physical resources at school); that children must learn to take responsibility for their own actions; and that it is the children, rather

than the teachers, who have the right to regulate their own behaviour. The teachers, however, do not take an "anything goes", back-seat approach to the latter. During developmental time they negotiate learning and behavioural contracts with individual children, encouraging them to learn to work as independent learners and emphasising the value of self-evaluation.

School I

This is an integrated Catholic school situated in a Wellington suburb. The junior school includes Samoan, Maori, Greek, Chinese, Polish, and Pakeha children. They come from a wide range of backgrounds, from "professional" families to "unskilled labourers". The junior school is comprised of single cell classrooms, but for 3 mornings a week the dividing doors between classrooms are removed and the learning groups are mixed. The outside physical space of the school is adequate for the children's needs, although the playgrounds are separated by a road.

The school has a strong religious outlook and the staff aim to help the parents participate in the learning process of the children. The new entrant teacher would like to see both parents and children develop together intellectually, morally, and spiritually. There is an emphasis on the development of the whole child. In her teaching programme, the new entrant teacher aims to develop strategies for independent learning parallel with emotional and behavioural maturity. Children learn to cope with their feelings, such as anger, and they are encouraged to find peaceful solutions. Sometimes drama is used to achieve this; sometimes it is a matter of talking things through.

School J

This is the largest school in our sample. It is a full primary school in the state system. Much of the junior school is open plan but organised on the principle of home spaces. Teachers work in teams, and children are grouped for reading, writing, and mathematics by their achievement levels. In June 1990 there were 190 children in the junior school and another 50 were expected to enter during the remainder of the year.

The community was described by the teachers we interviewed as a professional area in which many of the mothers work. There are very few Maori children on the roll but quite a few Asian children have recently come into the school.

The teachers aim to give children feelings of self-worth and security in their learning environment and encourage them to take responsibility for their own behaviour.

APPENDIX 2 - INTERVIEW SCHEDULES AND PROGRESS FOLDER

ASSISTANT PRINCIPAL INTERVIEW

1. How is the school organised? *(Classes; groups within classes)*

2. How many staff?
   - How many in the junior school?
   - If a 1:20 teacher, what does s/he do?

3. Do any staff have specialist areas, or special responsibilities in curriculum or assessment?
   - What training have they had for this?

4. Physical space for school: classroom, library, grounds. Is it adequate?
   (If not, why not, etc?)
   - What do children do in wet lunch hours?

5. Range of backgrounds of children in junior school, new entrants.
   (To cover ethnicity, socioeconomic status, preschool experience, family, mobility)

6. Does the school have a general philosophy/aim?
   - Any particular policy on assessment?
   - How was this worked out/evolved; has it changed recently?
   - Any particular policy on discipline/rewards?
   - How was this worked out evolved; has it changed recently?

7. What is the programme/curriculum at new entrant level? (*organising principles?*)
   - How was this worked out?
   - Has it changed over the last few years?
   - If so, why?

8. What information does the school have on new entrants?
   - What information on newcomers to school?

9. How do you assess a new entrant's learning needs?

10. How do you decide when a child is ready to go to the next class?

11. Do you have any children held back?

12. Do you have any children withdrawn for remedial or extension purposes?

13. What kinds of assessment do you use at new entrant level?

14. How do you use the information? (*What for?*)
    - Do teachers conference with you?
    - With other teachers?

15. What do you do when you're concerned about a child's lack of progress?

16. What do you report to parents?
    - Are parents concerned about how their children are getting on?
    - Do you have any contact with parents about children's progress/lack of it?

17. How are decisions on classroom resources made?
    - Do you think the resources are adequate?

18. What use do you make of people outside the school? *(e.g., advisers, psychological services?)*
    - *Ask for information on new entrant children's birth dates.*
    - *Ask for any assessment material (e.g., checkpoints)*

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FIRST YEAR - TEACHER INTERVIEW

Imagine I'm a Martian - everything's weird and wonderful for me, I don't understand anything.

1. What do you do for children as a teacher?

2. What do you hope to achieve with the children in your class by the time they go to another class?
   - What are your aims?

3. What are the 3 most important things children should learn in their first month of school?
   - Why?

4. What are the 3 most important things children should learn in their first year of school?
   - Why?

5. Do you think it's children's ability that determines how far they'll develop as individuals?

6. What is ability?
   - Where does it come from?
   - Is it the same thing as IQ?

7. Why do you assess the children?

8. When do you look at the records you've made?
   - How do you use them? *(Go through each kind of record separately)*
   - Do they take more/less time than you'd like?
   - Could you teach children as well without using them?
   - What do they tell you?

9. Do the forms of assessment you use suit all the children in your class?
   (e.g., English as a second language children)

10. What does a child need to be successful in school?
    - What are the ingredients?

11. Is there anything at this stage that is a good indicator of how well a child is going to do later?

12. What kind of feedback usually makes the most impression on children this age?

13. How do you decide whose work to put up on the wall?

14. How do you decide who to give stickers for good work to?

15. How do you decide who to take first when they're in a group and you've asked a question?

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16. How do you decide who to let go first at the end of the day?

17. Do the children ever take part in their own assessment?
    - If yes, when is this?
    - What benefits does it have?

18. Are there some areas of the curriculum that you're more confident teaching than others?

19. Are there any that you're unconfident in?

20. Are there some kinds of children that you're more confident teaching than others?

21. Are there any that you're unconfident with?

22. Can you compare this class with any others you've had in terms of progress/ability?

23. What material do you draw on for the end of year report to parents?
    - Do you mentally compare a child whose report you're writing with other children?
    - If you do, are they children in the same class, or other classes you've taught?

24. What would make it very hard for you to start teaching a newly arrived child?
    - What do they need to know/be able to do when they start?

25. Anything else you'd like to add about the role of assessment in the junior school, or about what helps children make progress at this age?

TEACHER INTERVIEW - BEGINNING OF SECOND AND THIRD YEARS

A. CLASS

1. Description (e.g., J2, S1)

2. How many children are in your class?

3. How many boys; how many girls?

4. What backgrounds do they have in terms of ethnicity and socioeconomic status?
   - Are there any ESL children?
   - Any children who are being mainstreamed?
   - Any other children who need particular attention?

5. What is the range of ages in your class?

6. How were they chosen to be in your class?

7. What is the range of ability in your class?

8. Are there any children who have been held back?

9. Number of groups, and size for - reading; maths; writing?

10. Do you group them for any other curriculum area?

11. How do you decide which group a child will go into?
    - Do you use information from the child's previous teacher?

12. What is the range of achievement in reading (levels); maths (BSM/other); writing?

B. PROGRAMME

1. What are the main emphases in your programme for reading; maths; writing; spelling?

2. Is there any other curriculum area that you emphasise?

3. Do you have any social or behavioural skills you would like them to grasp this year?

4. What kinds of assessment do you use?
   - Any ability tests/external tests?

5. What kind of discipline and/or reward system do you use in the classroom?

6. Do you work closely with the other teachers at your level?

7. Do you think the resources you've got in the classroom are adequate?
   - What about the physical size, etc., of the classroom?
   - Is the quality of the school library adequate?
   - How often does the class use it?

8. What contact do you have with most of the parents in the class?
   - Are they interested in what their children are doing at school?
   - Do you have any parent help in the classroom?
   - (If you do, is that useful?)

9. Are there some kinds of children you're more confident teaching than others? Are there any that you're not confident with?

10. How many years have you been teaching?
    - How many years at this school?
    - How many years at this level?

C. THE CHILDREN

1. What's your view of their ability?

2. How have they settled into their new class?

3. What's their attitude to school work like?

4. What friends do they have this year?

5. What kind of feedback has the most effect on their work; their behaviour?

6. Have you met their parents yet?
   - Are they interested in x's work; progress?
   - Do you think they are supportive of their child?

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TEACHER INTERVIEW - END THIRD YEAR

A. TEACHING PROGRAMME

1. What do you hope to achieve with the children in your class by the time they go on to another class?
   - (What are your aims?)
   Probe: for different areas - curriculum; skills; behaviour; attitudes.

2. Do you work out your class programme on your own, or with other junior school teachers?

3. What are the 3 most important things that you would like children in your class to have learnt this year?

4. What would make it very hard for a child not to learn these things this year?

5. What's different about teaching this stage than teaching 6-year-olds?; 8- to 9-year-olds?

6. What age group do you prefer teaching?
   - Why?

7. What kind of teaching do you like best - to whole class/groups/one to one?
   - Why?

8. Are there some areas of the curriculum that you're more confident teaching than others? (describe)

9. Are there any areas that you're unconfident about? (describe)

10. Are there some kinds of children that you're more comfortable teaching than others?
    - Who are the hardest children to deal with?

11. What do you do for children as a teacher?

B. VIEWS ON HOW CHILDREN PROGRESS AND ON THEIR ABILITY

1. What does a child need to be successful in school?
   - What is success?

2. Is there anything at this stage that is a good indicator of how well a child is going to do later?

3. What are the main barriers to a child making good progress at this stage?

4a. Do you have any children in your class who are not making the progress you thought they could? (describe; reasons)

4b. Are some children achieving better than you thought?
(describe; reasons)

5. Will all the children in the class "go up" at the end of the year?
Probe: for promotion practice

6. Do you think it's children's ability that determines how far they'll develop as individuals?

7. What's "ability"? Where does it come from?
Probe: Is it the same thing as IQ?

8. How does the class you're teaching this year compare with others at the same level you've had in terms of progress/ability?
- Do they cover a full range of ability?

Probe: re selection of children for classes in the junior school - by ability/age/what?

C. FEEDBACK TO CHILDREN AND PARENTS; ASSESSMENT AND PROGRESS RECORDS

1. What kind of feedback to children about their **work** makes the most positive impression on them at this age?
- Does it differ for different kinds of children?
- Ditto - re most negative impression on children?

2. What kind of feedback to children about their **behaviour** makes the most positive impression on them at this age?
- Does it differ for different kinds of children?
- Ditto - re most negative impression on children?

3. How do you decide whose work to put up on the wall/display?

4. How do you decide whose work to publish?
- Do children decide themselves?

5. How do you decide who to take first when the children are in a group and you've asked them a question?

6. What incentives/rewards do they respond to?
Probe: re stickers, stamps, letting go first at lunchtime, end of the day, other practices

7. Are the children aware of the groups they're in?
- Are they concerned?

8. Do children take part in assessing their own work in any area?

9. Check kinds of records/assessment used by teacher (from progress folders).

10. What use are the records you make of the children's progress?
    - Could you teach children as well without using them?
    - Do the forms of assessment/recording you use suit the children in your class?
    - How much time do they take? Can you do it mostly in class hours?

11. What material do you draw on for the end-of-year report to parents?
    - Do you mentally compare a child whose report you're writing with other children?
    - If you do, are they children in the same class, or other classes you've taught?

12. How do you report to parents on their children's work?

13. What do parents see of their children's work?
    - Do parents sign homework?
    - Reading, worksheets?

14. Are parents interested in how their children are getting on?
    - What indicates that they are interested?

15. Have there been cases where you've worked with parents to improve a child's work or behaviour?
    - If so, what was the outcome?

16. Are parents concerned about "success"?
    - Do they view success differently from you?

Any additional comments?

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TEACHER NOTES ON CHILDREN - BEGINNING SECOND AND THIRD YEARS

For each individual child in study:

1. What's your view of their ability?

2. How have they settled into their new class?

3. What's their attitude to school work like?

4. What friends do they have this year?

5. What kind of feedback has the most effect on their work?
   Their behaviour?

6. Have you met their parents yet?
   - Are they interested in _____ work?
   - Are they interested in _____ progress?
   - Do you think they are supportive of their child?

7. What is their mathematics level?

8. What is their reading level?

9. What is their writing "level"? [consider legibility of handwriting, originality, variety of topics and genre, length of stories]

10. Any impressions or observations of _____ this term, including any social behaviour, overall attitude, and any significant events in their school or home life.

TEACHER NOTES ON CHILDREN - END SECOND AND THIRD YEARS

For each individual child in study:

1 . Have they made the progress you expected they might when they first came into your class?
   - If not, why?
   - If better than expected, why?

2. Did you have a firm idea of what progress you expected them to make?
   - If yes, how did you arrive at that?

3. Were there any incidents with them that surprised you?

4. How would you describe them in terms of ability?
   (Check: are they comparing with teacher's own standard/other children in class?)

5. What kind of feedback on their **work** seems to work best with them?

6. What kind of feedback on their **behaviour** seems to work best with them?

7. What's the relationship between a child's work and their behaviour?

8. Have their friends at school changed over the year?
   - What kind of friendships do they seem to have? (e.g., close/crowd)

9. What class will they be in next year?

10. How well do you think they would do at School Certificate if it was still there when they got to the fifth form?

11. What are the main obstacles, if any, to their realising their potential?

12. What contact have you had with the parents?

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FIRST YEAR - CHILD INTERVIEW

1. *Ask the teacher to ask the child to pick a book they like/have been reading, and to go with you to tell you and your friend about it, and what it's like to be at school.*

2. *Start off the interview by saying -*

   Hello (name), I'm _____ and this is _____ *(introduce puppet).* S/he's going to start school soon, and s/he doesn't know much about school.

3. Can you tell him/her what you like about coming to school? *(Prompt)*
   - What's good about that?
   - What do you like especially about that?

   (Feedback with puppet - e.g., puppet clapping hands)

   and what about -

   - reading
   - maths
   - writing
   - singing
   - choice time

   (etc., according to school categories)

4. Is there anything you don't like about school?
   (Puppet reaction, e.g., hide head in hands)

   - Anything you wish you didn't have to do?
   - Anything else?

5. Does Mr/Mrs _____, (teacher/s) ever get cross with you?
   - When does that happen?
   - What are you doing then?
   - What does s/he say/do?
   - How do you feel then?

6. Does she/he say nice things to you?
   - When does that happen?
   - What are you doing then?
   - What does s/he say/do?
   - How do you feel then?

7. Can you show _____ how to read your book? Can you read him/her the story?
   If shy, get puppet to show enthusiasm, say, "Shall we start together?", then tail off after first page.

8. Would you like to tell _____ that story in your own words?
   (Prompt if necessary)
   - Anything else?

9. Do you read to Mum and/or Dad at home?

10. Do they read to you?

11. When you're at home, do you do any of the things you do here at school?
    - What sorts of things?
    - Anything else?
    - Do you count things when you're at home?

    Put 5 blocks on table/floor in random arrangement.

12. Now can you count these blocks for me?
    Repeat with 9

13. Can you give _____ 2 blocks?
    - Now what about 5?

    S/he'd like 9 blocks now!

    Put out 2 different stuffed animals, X and Y.

14. X and Y are hungry. X eats 3 biscuits (blocks) and Y eats 2 biscuits.
    (Place in front of animals)
    - How many biscuits did they eat altogether?

    (Make circular movement to include all the blocks)

    This time, X eats 6 biscuits and Y eats 3 biscuits. *(Place in front of animals)*
    How many biscuits did they eat altogether?

15. This time, X has 5 biscuits. *(Place in front of X)*
    X eats 2 of her/his biscuits. *(Use her/his to match child's gender; touch 2 blocks)*
    How many biscuits does X have left?
    - Now Y has 9 biscuits. *(Touch 3 blocks)*
    - How many biscuits does Y have left?

16. _____ wants to know what these numbers are. Can you tell her?
    (Show card with numerals, point to 2, then 5, and 9)
    Oh, you know lots of things! *(Use puppet)*

17. And what group are you in for reading?
    - What's that like?
    - Would you like to be in any other group?
    - Why would you like to be in _____ group? *(Name of group)*
    - Are you good at reading?
    - How do you know?

18. And what group are you in for maths?
    - What's that like?
    - Would you like to be in any other group?
    - Why would you like to be in any other group?
    - Are you good at maths?
    - How do you know?

19. Are you in other groups? *(Same questions as 17, and 18)*

20. And what are you going to do now when you go back to join the class?
You've been very nice to _____, telling her all these things, s/he'd like to be in your class with you!

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END SECOND YEAR - CHILD INTERVIEW

1. Ask teacher to introduce you to child, say that you're interested in what children do at school; get the teacher to pick a book that the child should be able to read/let them pick one from the independent books box (if there is one).

2. (Put child at ease . . .) Get them to tell you what they had for breakfast to test the recorder; play a little back to check recorder (and let them hear themselves . . .)

3. Now, I'd like to hear you read your story . . .
   (Give help if they get stuck - prompt, or try first/last letter recognition)

4. Would you like to tell me that story in your own words?
   (They may want to discuss characters etc. with you)

5. Do you like that story?
   - What do you like about it/don't like about it?

6. What kinds of books do you like to read best?

7. Do you go to the public library to borrow books?
   - By self/with parents/others?

8. Do you do much reading at home?
   - Do you read comics?
   - Do Mum and Dad read to you at nights?

9. What group are you in for reading at school?
   - Is that a good group to be in?
   - What's good/bad about it?
   - Is there another group you'd rather be in?
   - Why?

10. Are you good at reading?
    - How do you know that?

    (If they say they're not good at reading etc., ask if they would like to be good at it, and what would help them be good at it)

11. What group are you in for writing?
    - Is that a good group to be in?
    - What's good/bad about it?
    - Is there another group you'd rather be in?
    - Why?

12. What do you like to write about most?
    - What kind of writing do you like least?

13. Are you good at writing?
    - How do you know that?

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- Do you like to publish?
- What do you like/don't like about publishing?

14. Are you good at maths?
    - How do you know?

15. What group are you in for maths?
    - Is that a good group to be in?
    - What's good/bad about it?
    - Is there another group you'd rather be in?
    - Why?

16. What maths work do you like best?

17. What maths work do you like least?

18. I've got some maths things for you to do now.

    (Put 5 blocks on table/floor in random arrangement) Now can you count these blocks for me? *(Note how they count, whether touch them etc., repeat with 9 blocks then 14)*

19. *(With 2 stuffed animals, put blocks in front of them)*

    X and Y are hungry. X eats 6 biscuits, Y gets 3, how many biscuits did they eat altogether? *(make circular motion to include all the blocks)*
    - This time X eats 9 biscuits, and Y eats 5, how many did they eat altogether?
    - Now X must be really hungry, she ate 13 biscuits, Y gets 8: how many does that make?

20. Now X has 5 biscuits, and she eats 2 - how many are left? *(Touch 2 blocks)*
    - And if she had 9 and ate 3, how many are left?
    - And if she had 13 and ate 6?

21. *(Show card with numbers on it)*
    Can you tell me what number this is? 5, 9, 14, 21, 37.

22. When you are counting, what number comes just before 5?
    (Repeat with 9, 16, 23)

23. I want you to pretend you've got a pile of apples. I'll ask you to give some of your apples to me, then you tell me how many apples you've got left.

    a) You've got 2 apples and you give 1 to me. How many apples do you have left?
    b) Repeat for 4 apples, 2 taken away from the pile.
    c) Repeat for 5 apples, 2 taken away.
    d) Repeat for 9 apples, 4 taken away.
    e) Repeat for 14 apples, 9 taken away.

    (*Note any use of fingers or counting out loud*)

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24. Do you do any maths things at home?
(Prompt - counting, counting money, numbers on Lotto tickets, dates on calendars, Lego, calculator, computer)

25. What games do you like to play at home?
- Who do you play them with?

26. Do you watch TV at home?
- What's your favourite TV programme?

27. Do you do any drawings/paintings at home?

28. What do you like to do best when you're at home?

29. Do you like coming to school?
- What's good/not good about school?

30. Why do you think you go to school?
- What's school all about?

31. *(If appropriate)* Do you like circle time?
- What do you like/don't like about it?

32. What else are you good at besides (whatever they've mentioned before)?

33. Tell me about your friends at school this year . . . are they in your class?
- What do you like to do together? *(If play, ask what kind of play)*

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END THIRD YEAR - CHILD INTERVIEW

Get the teacher to pick a book that the child should be able to read/let child pick book from independent books box.

1. Now I'd like to hear you read your story/a few pages (if chapter book). . .

2. Would you like to tell me that story in your own words?

3. Do you like that story?
   - What do you like/don't like about it?

4. What group are you in for reading?
   - Is that a good group to be in?
   - What's good/bad about it?
   - Is there another group you'd rather be in?
   - Why?

5. Are you good at reading?
   - How do you know that?

   (If they say not good at reading etc., ask them if they would like to be good at it, and what would help them be good at it)

   - How does (teacher's name) know what you're like at reading?

   (Probe: re awareness of any assessments, e.g., reading to teacher as teacher marks record sheet, and feelings about that)

6. What kind of reading do you like best?
   - What kind of reading do you like least?

7. Do you take books home from school to read?
   - Do you like doing that?
   - Do Mum or Dad read to you at night?
   - Does (older sibling) read to you at night?
   - Do you read to them?
   - Do you read to older sibling; younger sibling?
   - Do you do any reading by yourself?
   - Do you read anything other than books at home (e.g., newspapers, magazines, words on TV, comics, words on wrapping, packages, signs on shops)?
   - Do you get books from the public library to read?
   - Who chooses them?
   - Do you like going to the library?
   - Do Mum/Dad; older sibling read much?

8. Are you in a group for writing?
   - Is that a good group to be in?
   - What's good/bad about it?
   - Is there another group you'd rather be in? Why?

9. What kind of writing do you like to do most; least?
   - What do you like writing about best; least?

10. Are you good at writing?
    - How do you know that?

    (If not good, ask them if they would like to be good at it, and what would help them be good at it)

    How does (teacher's name) know what you're like at writing?
    (Probe re awareness of any assessments, and feelings about that)

11. Do you take any writing work home to do?
    - Do you like doing that? (if yes, what/why)
    - Do you do any other writing at home?
    - Do Mum/Dad/older sibling do any writing at home?

12. Do you like publishing?
    - What do you like about it?

13. Are you in a group for maths?
    - Is that a good group to be in?
    - What's good/bad about it?
    - Is there another group you'd rather be in? Why?

14. What kind of maths do you like to do most; least?

15. Are you good at maths?
    - How do you know that?

    (If not good, ask them if they would like to be good at it, and what would help them be good at it)

    How does (teacher's name) know what you're like at maths?
    (Probe: re awareness of any assessments, and feelings about that)

16. Do you take any maths work home to do? *(check re times tables)*

17. Do you do any other maths at home?
    (Prompt, e.g., counting money, numbers on Lotto ticket, dates on calendars, Lego, use calculator, computer use)

18. Maths tasks

    (i) Numerical recognition:
    Can you tell me the name of this number?

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(4 sheets of paper with large numbers on them):

5	9	14
61	84	90
267	500	
3481	7000	

(ii) Rote Counting:
Please count as far as you can. *(See if they can reach 110. Encourage them to go further if they stop, but do not give them the number after the last one they've given)*

(iii) Sequence Backwards:
When you're counting, what's the number just before 9? And what about just before 16? And what about just before 50? *(If they have trouble with 9, ask about 5)*

(iv) Subtraction with Imaginary Objects:
I want to pretend you've got a pile of apples. I'll ask you to give some of your apples to me, then you tell me how many apples you've got left.

(a) You've got 4 apples and you give 1 to me, how many apples do you have left? (*go to 2-1 if don't get this one*)
(b) 5 apples, 2 taken away
(c) 9 apples, 4 taken away
(d) 14 apples, 9 taken away

(*Note any use of fingers, or counting out loud*)

19. What games do you like to play at home?
- Who do you play them with?

20. Do you watch TV at home?
- What's your favourite TV programme?

21. Do you make anything at home?
(Probe: re Lego, construction, draw, paint, models, collage)

22. What do you like to do best when you're at home?

23. Do you go to any outside classes, e.g., music/dance? Do you belong to any sports teams?

24. Do you like coming to school? What's good/bad about school?
(Probe further if school subjects not mentioned)

25. What's your favourite activity in class?
(Probe if say, playtime)

What's your least favourite?

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26. Why do you think you go to school? What's school all about?

27. *(If appropriate)* Do you like circle/sharing time?
    - What do you like/don't like about it?

28. Have you done any tests this year?
    - Did you enjoy that? *(Probe for reasons)*

29. What else at school are you good at besides *(whatever they've mentioned before)*?
    - Is there anything at school you're not good at?
    - What do you think you do best at in class?
    - What do you think you do worst at in class?

30. Tell me about your friends at school . . . are they in your class?
    - Are they in your (work) group/s?
    - What do you like to do together?

31. What are you going to do now when you go back to class?
    - Do you like that?

Thank you very much for talking with me. Do you have any questions you'd like to ask me?

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PARENT INTERVIEW - SECOND YEAR

1. Any changes in _____'s attitude to school?
   - If yes, why?

2. Is there anything s/he likes especially?

3. Is there anything s/he doesn't like?

4. What aspects of school does s/he talk about at home?
   - Does s/he talk at all about the groups s/he's in?
   - Does s/he show you any stamps s/he gets for his/her work/behaviour?
   - Does s/he tell you what the teacher's said to him/her?
   - If so - when?

5. What do you feel about giving stamps?
   - What s/he says teacher says.
   - (Any other practice of teacher's that parent mentions)

6. Does s/he bring work home for you to see?
   - Is it different from last year's?

7. Have you been into _____'s classroom?
   - If yes - how did it strike you?
   - Is it different from your own primary school class?
   - What's different?
   - Is that better?

8. Have you talked with the teacher this year?
   - What about?
   - What was it like?
   - How do you know how s/he's doing at school?
   - Have you talked to the teacher about his/her progress?
   - Was that useful?
   - If not, why not?

9. Do you have an idea of what you would like _____ to be able to do by the end of this year?

10. How would you describe _____'s strengths?

11. What would you say were the areas s/he was less strong in?

12. Are there any activities which s/he brings home for you to do with him/her?

13. Do you read to him/her?
   - How often?
   - Go to the library?
   - What kinds of books does s/he like?
   - Does s/he read the books to him/herself?
   - Does s/he read the books to you?

14. Does she do any writing at home?

15. Do you try to teach him/her anything at home?
    - What?
    - How?
    - Why?

16. What does s/he like to do outside school?

17. Do his/her friends come from her class?

Can I ask a few questions about you and your husband's own interests?

18. Do you/partner like reading?
    - What kind etc?
    - When/how often do you read?
    - Do the children see you reading?

19. Do you/partner write many letters?
    - Would _____ see you doing any writing, any crossword puzzles, etc?

20. Do you have good memories of your own school days?

21. Occupation and qualifications of yourself and spouse.

PARENT INTERVIEW - END THIRD YEAR

Check if there's anything they want to know about the project.

1. Any changes in _____'s attitude to school?

2. Is there anything s/he likes especially about school?

3. Is there anything/s/he doesn't like about school?

4. What aspects of school does s/he talk about at home?
   - Does s/he talk at all about the groups s/he's in?
   - How does s/he feel about them?
   - Does s/he show you any stickers/awards she gets?
   - Does s/he tell you what the teacher's said?
   - If so, when? *(Probe for parents' feelings about these)*

5. Does s/he bring home work for you to see?
   - What do you think about it?

6. Does s/he bring home any school work to be done at home?
   - What kind?
   - Do you help with this? How?
   - Do you think this work is good for _____?
   - How can you tell?

7. Have you been into _____'s classroom this year?
   - How often?
   - What did you think of it as a place to learn?
   - Is it different from your own primary school experience?
   - If yes, which do you think is better? Why?

8. What involvement do you have with _____'s school?
   - Are you happy with that?

9. What communication do you have with the school/from the school?

10. Have you talked with _____'s teacher this year?
    - What about?
    - Are you comfortable talking with her?
    - Are there any matters you'd be uncomfortable raising with her? *(Probe for reasons)*
    - Do you feel you get sufficient information about what's happening in the class, its programme?
    - If no, what else would you like?

11. Have you talked to _____'s teacher about his/her progress this year?
    - Was that useful?
    - If not, why not?

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12. Have you had any reports back this year?
    - Did they tell you what you wanted to know?
    - If no, what else would you like to know?

13. What do you know about how the school assesses _____'s progress?
    (*Probe for perceptions of assessment*)

14. Did you have an idea at the beginning of the year of what you would like _____ to be able to do by now?
    - If yes, what?
    - Can _____ do those things by now?

15. What do you think children should be able to do at the end of their first 3 years of school?
    - Can _____ do these things?
    (Probe for feelings, reasons)

16. What do you think helps children succeed in the first 3 years of school?
    (Probe for reasons)

17. Did _____ go to preschool?
    - For how long? What did you think of it?

18. How would you describe _____'s strengths?

19. What would you say were the areas s/he was less strong in?

20. What does s/he like to do outside school now?
    - Any favourite games/activities
    - Any formal activities (e.g., gym, music classes)
    - Does s/he like watching TV?
    - What's her favourite programme at the moment?

21. Do his/her friends come from her class at school?

22. Do you read to _____?
    - How often?
    - Does s/he read to you?
    - Does s/he read to older sibling?
    - Does s/he read to younger sibling?

23. Does _____ go to the public library?
    - How often?
    - Does s/he choose books by her/himself?
    - What kind of books does s/he like?
    - Does _____ read by her/himself?

24. Does s/he do any writing at home (e.g., cards, lists, stories)?
    - What kind/s?
    - Copy/made up?

25. Does s/he make things at home?
    - What kind of things?
    - By self/help parent/help sibling?

26. Does s/he help round the house (re kitchen, building, fixing things)?

27. Do you try to teach _____ anything at home?

28. How well do you think _____ will go when s/he sits School Certificate?

29. What occupation would you like _____ to have when s/he's an adult?

30. What hobbies do you (and your partner) have?
    - Do you belong to any voluntary groups?

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PROGRESS IN *MATHS* FOR THE TERM

ENDING 3 MAY 1991

(a) What is _____'s BSM/New Growth level: _____

(b) Is _____ in a group for any part of the mathematics programme?

Yes [ ]
No [ ]
Sometimes [ ]

(c) If _____ **sometimes** works in a group, what activities are undertaken?

(d) If _____ is in a group, how many are in the group? _____

(e) What were _____'s maths activities for this term?

(f) What progress has _____ made in maths this year?

(g) What has been _____'s attitude to mathematics this term?

(h) Can you identify any problems _____ is having with maths?

PROGRESS IN *READING*

(a) What is _____'s reading level: _____

(b) Is _____ in a group for any part of the reading programme?

Yes [ ]
No [ ]
Sometimes [ ]

(c) If _____ **sometimes** works in a group, what activities are undertaken?

(d) If _____ works in a group, how many are in the group? _____

(e) What were _____'s reading activities this term?

(f) What progress has _____ made in reading this term?

(g) What has been _____'s attitude to reading this term?

(h) Can you identify any problems _____ is having with reading?

PROGRESS IN *WRITING*

(a) Is _____ in a group for any part of the writing programme?

Yes [ ]
No [ ]
Sometimes [ ]

(b) If _____ **sometimes** works in a group, what activities are undertaken?

(c) If _____ is in a group, how many are in the group? _____

(d) What were _____'s writing activities for this term?
(e.g., storywriting, captions?)

(e) What topics has _____ written about?

(f) What progress has _____ made in writing this term?

(g) How legible is _____'s writing?

(h) What has been _____'s attitude to writing this term?

(i) Can you identify any problems _____ has had with writing this term?

Please attach 2 dated photocopies of any of _____'s work this term at the back of this section. Thank you.

OTHER NOTES

Please use this page to record any other impressions or observations you have made of _____ this term, including social behaviour, overall attitude, and any significant events in their school or home life.

APPENDIX 3

UNIVERSITY OF EAST ANGLIA BEGINNING WRITING ENQUIRY GROUP'S MODEL OF WRITING DEVELOPMENT

Level 2 Initial Collaborative Text-Making

1. To form and orientate all letters
2. To begin to control letter size.
3. To use word and letter spacing.
4. To begin collecting a writing vocabulary of words that can be correctly spelt.
5. To analyse some words into phonic units.

[letter concept, awareness of spelling, sentence concept]

Level 3 Initial Independent Text-Making

1. To begin to use upper/lower case letters with some consistency.
2. To mark sentence boundaries with capital letter and full stop.
3. To use classroom resources for some spelling.
4. To invent other spellings.

[concept of sentence structure, concept of syllabic structure of words]

Level 4 Further Collaborative Text-Making and Revision of Text

1. To monitor text for meaning.
2. To check sentence construction.
3. To regularise spelling towards conventions of English.
4. To use apostrophe to mark possession and contraction.
5. To use question marks.

[concept of story structure, concept of sequential ordering of reports of experience, concept of rule-governed basis of spelling]
Previous skills are automatised.

Level 5 [Level 1 within Associative Writing]

1. To control time sequence text.
2. To control sentence linking, esp. temporal sequence.
3. Use of pronouns.
4. To use some commas, e.g., listing.
5. To use speech marks.

[concept of forward planning, knowing meaning intended is shaped in different ways depending whether recalling own experience in a report or inventing it as in a story]

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Level 6 [Level 2 Collaborative Text-Making and Revision Towards Communicative Writing]

1. To control time change in text.
2. To use alternatives to temporal linking.
3. To combine sentences through subordination.
4. To identify theme and subtopics as basis of paragraphing.

[meaning has to be made very explicit, concept of sentence structure is extended to include adverbial and adjectival functions in organisation of complex sentences]

Level 7 [Level 3 Collaborative Text-Making and Revision Towards Unified Writing]

1. To embed separate ideas in one clause, e.g.,. Yesterday I wrote to Hans my German penfriend, instead of Yesterday I wrote to Hans. Hans is my pen-friend. Hans is German.
2. Stance towards message.

[concept of paragraphing, concept of writer's stance]

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APPENDIX 4 - FOUR EXAMPLES OF SCHOOL ENTRY ASSESSMENT

APPENDIX 4 - 1

CHILD'S NAME: _____ DOB _____ DOA _____ Date and/or Comment

1.	Likes to look at picture books.	
2.	Likes to listen to stories read.	
3.	Likes to draw things he knows.	
4.	Occasionally expresses curiosity about certain bits of print.	
5.	Is beginning to use pictures as clues.	
6.	Can memorise certain poems and recite them.	
7.	Consistently holds books right side up.	
8.	Can follow words on a chart from left to right.	
9.	Can follow words spoken with printed words on the line.	
10.	Can speak clearly in sentences.	
11.	Can sustain attention and sit still at least 5-10 minutes during a story.	
12.	Can identify a sentence in print or on a chart.	
13.	Can make inferences from pictures.	
14.	Can discuss sequences from pictures.	
15.	Can remember the proper sequence of at least some of the events of a story.	
16.	Knows a small core of basic sight words.	
17.	Expects what he reads to sound meaningful and sensible.	

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LANGUAGE - Oral

1. Can speak in a sentence clearly.
2. Can speak using several correct sentences.
3. Takes part in discussion (give and take).
4. Can talk to a small group.
5. Can ask and answer a question.
6. Can tell or re-tell a story or poem.
7. Can carry or deliver an oral message.
8. Can interpret and predict from a picture or story.

LANGUAGE - Written

1. Can record pictorially.
2. Copies own name.
3. Copies under caption.
4. Reads the captions back to teacher.

SOCIAL/EMOTIONAL

1. Very dependent on adults, timid, easily upset.
2. Apathetic, seemingly content to do nothing.
3. Easily distracted, restless, constantly fidgets and squirms.
4. Will play happily with other children, will share equipment, personal possessions, etc.
5. Unable to cope with new experiences, easily upset.
6. Confidence - talks to adults confidently - generally shows self-confidence.

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SCHOOL

Observation of New Entrant.

CHILD'S NAME: _____ DOB _____ DOA _____

INTELLECTUAL	DATE	DATE
1. Uses names of familiar objects.		
2. Understands and obeys simple instructions.		
3. Comprehends simple questions and gives sensible answers.		
4. Can repeat a story without much difficulty.		
5. Recognises his own name.		
6. Can tell sex differences e.g., (boy, girl)		
7. Holds pencil and can imitate vertical and circular strokes.		
8. Can copy circles.		
9. Draws primitive "man" showing head and legs.		
10. Draws recognisable "men" and "houses".		

COMMENT:

PHYSICAL OR MOTOR		
1. Can use scissors.		
2. Can thread.		
3. Can do simple jigsaws and puzzles.		
4. Strong tendency to right/left handedness.		
5. Can keep within lines when colouring.		
6. Can copy his own name.		
7. Is generally well co-ordinated.		

COMMENT:

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APPENDIX 4 - 2

UNDERSTANDING	BEHAVIOURS
Reading is an enjoyable, purposeful activity. Enjoys books independently. DATE MAINTAINED DATE	Child chooses to "read" in the book area and signs and song charts, etc., displayed around the room.
Prose can be turned into speech. DATE MAINTAINED DATE	Child indicates the print when asked where the story is written.
Speech is segmented into words - spoken word matched to written word. DATE MAINTAINED DATE	Child can point to words matching 1 to 1 as he/she reads a familiar text.

APPROACHES USED TO DEVELOP THE ABOVE UNDERSTANDINGS

- Teacher Reading
- Shared Reading
- Independent Behaviour with Books
- Language Experience
- Writing

UNDERSTANDING	BEHAVIOURS
The picture is a guide to the message . . . DATE MAINTAINED DATE	Child invents sentences to interpret print supported by pictures.
Text conveys a constant message. DATE MAINTAINED DATE	Child almost memorises the text of a familiar book when retelling it.
Words are composed of letters in a set sequence . . . DATE MAINTAINED DATE	Child writes words accurately.

MONITORING

- Sensitive Observation
- Running Records
- 6-Year-Old Diagnostic Survey

UNDERSTANDING	BEHAVIOURS
Book language is different from oral language. DATE MAINTAINED DATE	Child uses book language in the sentences he/she invents.
Read front/back. Print written left/right, top/bottom. DATE MAINTAINED DATE	Child can turn book to front and turn pages one at time. Indicates where to start reading and moves finger under the line.
Any word has a constant representation in print . . . DATE MAINTAINED DATE	Child recognises own name and some other words.

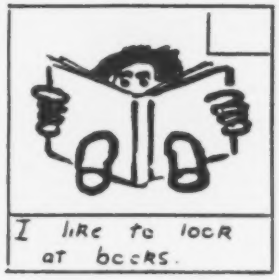
APPROACHES WHEN ABOVE UNDERSTANDINGS ARE CONSOLIDATED

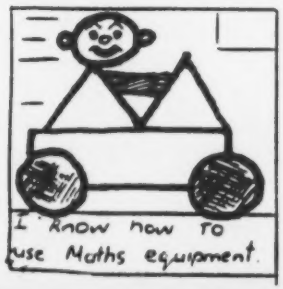
- Teacher Reading
- Shared Reading
- Independent Reading
- Writing
- Guided Reading

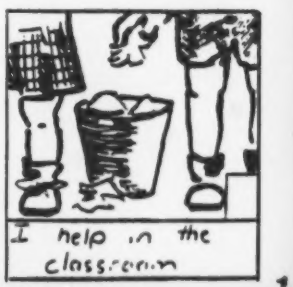
APPENDIX 4 - 3

Explanation of marks

C Consistently
F Frequently
O Occasionally
N Not yet







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F	7. The child to tell a story from three, no more than four, well-known and clearly sequenced pictures - e.g., from the 3 Little Pigs.		
F	8. "Tell me a story/or a nursery rhyme/or a TV advertisement/something about himself."		
I or F	KNOWLEDGE OF BOOKS AND BASIC READING/WRITING EXPERIENCES 9. Is the child able to handle a book correctly?		
Informal Only	10. Is he able to sit through the telling/reading of a story?		
I or F	11. "Show me the picture; now show me where to start reading". - Starting point.		
I or F I or F I or F I or F	12. "Point to the words as I read". Use a familiar story or the child's caption. 13. Has L - R 14. Return sweep - 15. 1-1 (Child should do the reading) -		
I or F	16. "Show me a word that you know; what does it say?" (Use a picture caption or the child's caption).		
I or F	17. Identify a book by its cover. "What is this book about?" - e.g., The Gingerbread Man.		
Preferably F	18. "Write (draw) your name". Christian name usually but some children may write both.		
Preferably F	19. Knowledge of alphabet letter names in their own name. Use either the child's copy if accurate, or write for them and then check.		
I or F	20. Is able to predict a logical word in any oral CLOZE situation - e.g., "The little boy fell and hurt his _____"		

APPENDIX 5 - MATERIAL FROM 1989 AND 1991 NZCER SURVEYS

Several of the questions asked in the 1989 and 1991 NZCER national surveys of the impact of Tomorrow's Schools in primary schools and intermediates have material relevant to the exploration of assessment and reporting practices in the first 3 years of school.

In 1989, two-fifths of the new entrant teachers who completed the teacher questionnaire in the survey mentioned no source of information on pupils entering their class. About half the new entrant teachers reported that they had had information from children's preschools.

Teachers were also asked in a set of open-ended questions to "Please note the methods you use for information . . ." related to different purposes to which assessment can be put. Tables 1 and 2 give the responses for new entrant only teachers, NE-J1 and J1 teachers, J1-2 and J2 teachers, and J3/S1 teachers. The inclusion of *PAT* tests at the new entrant level, when the NZCER survey of use of its tests would indicate very little use indeed at this level (Croft and Reid 1991), and a surprisingly high level of discussion with a child's previous teacher to prepare a profile of the child for the teacher to come may indicate that teachers answered as generic teachers, rather than simply reporting on their own particular classroom practice. Nonetheless, some interesting data emerges which largely confirms the picture of junior school assessment gained by the more contextual and qualitative study in the 10 Wellington schools. It also raises some intriguing questions about the different uses of different kinds of assessment, particularly for reporting to parents and other teachers.

Table 3 gives similar data from the 1991 survey results of the assessment procedures used by teachers. Just over a third of the teachers reported changes in the procedures they used since 1990, and almost two-thirds said there had been an increase in the amount of assessment they did. While 45 percent of the new entrant teachers, and 56 percent of the junior teachers felt this gave them a better picture of individual children's learning needs, 28 percent of the new entrant, and 33 percent of the junior teachers felt that it gave them less time to attend to individual children's learning needs, and a quarter of teachers at both stages felt it had increased their workload. Other effects of increased assessment reported by some teachers were increased parent confidence, closer relationships with parents, and an increased understanding of their pupils. Reporting to parents had also been increased since 1990 by 26 percent of the new entrant, and 31 percent of the junior school teachers in the survey.

APPENDIX 4 - 4

EARLY READING - ENTRY BEHAVIOUR CHECKLIST

This checklist was compiled by the Wanganui Reading Advisers, to aid teachers in evaluating the Early Reading behaviour of New Entrants.

It is not anticipated that the list will be used in a formal testing situation but rather in the whole class, small group or "incidental" teacher/pupil interaction.

Teachers may feel that some New Entrants will be quite happy to be tested in a formal situation - 1:1 on their first day, and if this is so, teachers should feel free to do so.

Emphasis is placed on evaluation of each new entrant as early as possible after entry so that lacking skills may be taught as soon as possible.

F = Formal
I = Informal

		CHILD'S NAME	
I or F	AUDITORY MEMORY 1. Can follow directions - for example: "Go to the door and shut it please."		
I or F	2. "Listen and then say this little rhyme - I can smile You can smile Smile, smile, smile."		
I or F	VISUAL DISCRIMINATION 3. "Bring me your name card." Recognition of name in set of four.		
I or F	4. Can see word likenesses and differences - (a) "Show me two the same - see, up, see." (b) "Show me one that is different/one that is not the same - come, here, come."		
Preferably F	ORAL LANGUAGE FACILITY 5. Acceptable language patterns - Ask the child "Where do you live?" His reply will give some indication of development.		
F	6. "Tell me about this picture". Could be the child's jigsaw or a classroom picture on the wall. (Used Departmental picture - coloured - 4 children with pets.)		

F	7. The child to tell a story from three, no more than four, well-known and clearly sequenced pictures - e.g., from the 3 Little Pigs.		
F	8. "Tell me a story/or a nursery rhyme/or a TV advertisement/something about himself."		
I or F	KNOWLEDGE OF BOOKS AND BASIC READING/WRITING EXPERIENCES 9. Is the child able to handle a book correctly?		
Informal Only	10. Is he able to sit through the telling/reading of a story?		
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Table 1

Junior School Teachers' Use of Common Assessment Methods Reported in NZCER's 1989 Survey

Purpose/Method	Running records %	Work samples %	Observations %	Check -points %	Discussion with previous teacher %
Group children	77 88 87 86	32 32 21 39	55 72 63 75	71 76 68 43	3 3 0 4
Place children in class	41 26 25 16	25 16 13 13	31 42 31 29	31 13 31 29	6 3 3 7
Shape teaching strategies	63 40 37 39	38 21 17 32	72 51 49 48	47 42 35 30	6 3 0 4
Confirm own observations, feelings	50 42 51 34	31 18 17 18	3 3 6 7	6 6 7 11	34 18 21 21
Select child for individual help	53 49 56 55	31 18 17 31	56 55 58 71	28 37 32 22	13 6 3 4
Monitor children's progress after help	53 44 44 45	34 18 24 38	59 50 62 67	0 3 3 5	44 32 39 15
Profile for next teacher	59 53 54 48	22 28 21 23	25 15 16 7	13 13 11 14	53 34 43 29
Reports to parents	53 32 32 38	41 21 20 23	31 21 20 23	6 0 1 9	9 4 3 7

Key (for Tables 1 and 2)
In each box:

new entrant % is in top left corner (N = 33)
NE - J1 % is in top right corner (N = 68)
J1 - J2 % is in bottom left corner (N = 71)
J3 - S1 % is in bottom right corner (N = 56)
Total N = 227

Table 2

Junior School Teachers' Use of Other Assessment Methods Reported in NZCER's 1989 Survey

Use/Method	*PAT* tests %	Behaviour with children %	Class tests %	General ability tests %	Child age %	6-Year Net/ reading recovery %
Group children	6 0 6 27	3 3 0 4	0 0 1 7	10 7 13 11	0 1 3 4	16 28 27 30
Place children in class	0 0 1 13	9 13 15 20	0 0 0 4	16 9 17 7	19 41 34 18	0 13 15 7
Shape teaching strategies	6 0 6 7	3 0 0 2	3 0 0 5	16 13 10 5	3 1 1 2	0 3 6 4
Confirm own observations, feelings	69 60 57 48	0 4 6 2	0 0 1 0	0 6 3 7	19 7 24 18	3 7 9 5
Select child for individual help	6 0 3 5	6 13 8 9	0 1 3 4	6 9 11 9	3 8 0 5	53 49 44 25
Monitor children's progress after help	3 4 4 13	0 1 3 0	22 18 14 13	3 9 1 2	13 0 13 7	0 0 0 2
Profile for next teacher	53 56 49 48	31 32 37 39	6 10 10 18	9 6 7 11	0 0 1 1	0 1 0 0
Report to parents	41 21 38 36	0 1 1 2	6 3 1 5	0 4 3 4	0 0 0 0	28 49 42 39

Table 3

Assessment Procedures Reported by Teachers in NZCER's 1991 Survey

	New Entrants (N = 65) %	Junior (N = 118) %	Standard (N = 111) %	Forms 1&2 (N = 47) %
Work samples	97	97	95	91
Running records	92	99	91	81
Behaviour observations	91	88	77	83
Primary progress records	89	89	74	53
Curriculum checkpoints	86	82	60	60
6-Year Reading Net	80	88	5	0
Outside tests	38	43	86	74
Other	20	12	18	17
Behavioural checkpoints	17	23	23	19
Spelling tests	14	33	91	68
IQ tests	2	2	5	9